Hafa Adai!

# Saipan Tribune

$1

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 4
**FRIDAY** JANUARY 5, 2024
**www.saipantribune.com**
www.facebook.com/saipantribune

**PSS transitions to leading-edge database systems, Tyler Technologies. PAGE 2**

**Terlaje: Net metering does not work for CUC. PAGE 3**

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The CNMI's tourism industry was energized after nearly 4,000 tourists visited Saipan for a day after MSC *Bellissima* made a port call on Saipan yesterday.

## Cruise ship brings in nearly 4,000 visitors

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI's tourism industry got a much-needed shot in the arm yesterday after nearly 4,000 Japanese tourists visited Saipan for a day when the cruise ship MSC *Bellissima* made a port call on Saipan.

Thanks to MSC *Bellissima*'s daylong port call, the CNMI's tourism industry was energized with about 3,800 visitors getting off the ship to see what Saipan has to offer.

At the Saipan Port, vendors lined up with their goods, ready to give visitors a taste of the CNMI's food and culture.

*See CRUISE on Page 4*

# 1 dead, 1 critical in Finasisu homicide

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A man was found lifeless while a woman was found critically injured after emergency personnel responded to an injured person(s) call at a residence along Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Finasisu.

*See HOMICIDE on Page 4*

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

*Saipan Tribune* visited the scene of the Finasisu homicide that remains under investigation and police tape had blocked off the entrance to the road leading to the victims' residence. The tape has since been broken but the area remains an active crime scene.

## Felicidad Ogumoro, 74

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Ogumoro

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang joined the Marianas in mourning the loss of former representative Felicidad Leiwamal Taman Ogumoro, who passed away on Wednesday at 74.

Ogumoro in 1978 became the first female of Carolinian heritage to be elected to the CNMI House of Representatives representing Precinct 5. She served in the government of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the private sector, and local government

*See OGUMORO on Page 4*

## Man arrested after trying to flee traffic stop—DPS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A man is forcefully detained after he allegedly tried to flee from police following a traffic stop.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A traffic stop resulted in the arrest of a man after he tried to escape police because he allegedly didn't have his driver's license with him.

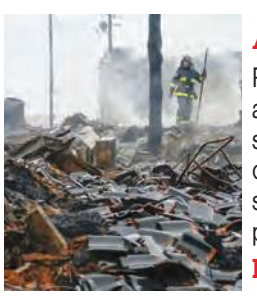
A video of the arrest circulated on social media yesterday, showing a police officer pulling a man out of his vehicle with the help of others, before pinning him to the ground and cuffing him.

The video prompted a response from DPS, which said in a statement that the man had been arrested because

*See ARRESTED on Page 4*

## INSIDE

**BUSINESS**
The Marianas Visitors Authority and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce both welcomed E-Land Group's opening of NC Picks Saipan in Garapan.
**PAGE 13**



**ASIA**
Rescuers braved the cold in a race against time as they searched for survivors along Japan's western coastline after a powerful earthquake smashed homes and left at least 78 people dead and 51 missing.
**PAGE 15**

**OFFBEAT**
Security officers found 17 bullets concealed inside a disposable baby diaper Wednesday at New York's LaGuardia Airport, the Transportation Security Administration said.
**PAGE 17**

GOT A NEWS TIP?
TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

# Local

## PSS transitions to leading cloud-based database systems, Tyler Technologies

A milestone.

Thus did interim Education commissioner Donna M. Flores describe the Public School System's transition yesterday afternoon to the Tyler Technologies/Tyler Enterprise ERP, a cloud-based software that improves and automates the financial management system of the school district.

After nearly three years of planning and training, the PSS-Finance department switched at exactly 2pm yesterday to the most modern software integration system that will include financials, human resources, procurement, and federal programs related systems of PSS' central office.

PSS had been using the JD Edwards System for decades before this transition.

Flores was joined by PSS Finance director Arlene Lizama, Tyler Technologies project manager Caroline Wine, and implementation consultant Sean Grogan, as they witnessed PSS treasurer Elia Marie O. Santos log on to the system, officially migrating PSS Finance's system to Tyler Technologies.

By the third week of January this month, Tyler Enterprise ERP will be rolled out throughout the school district's 20 elementary, middle, and high school campuses on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Tyler Technologies/Tyler Enterprise ERP is the nation's leader in integrated software that has done over 40,000 installations, and serves 25% of all school districts in the entire United States, according to Wine. "We are glad to have the opportunity to empower the CNMI PSS to be stronger in all that they do for the community," she said.

Aside from PSS, the CNMI Department of Finance and the Commonwealth Health-Care Corp. are the only other entities in the Commonwealth that have implemented this

Flores acknowledged the value of PSS' investment in the new automated Tyler Technologies/Tyler Enterprise ERP.

"This will definitely streamline all financial-related activities that happen on a daily basis at PSS. It is a more elaborate and efficient system that provides improvements," Flores said, adding that it addresses the recommendations of external auditors in further improving PSS' financial management systems.

"This is essentially strengthening our accountability and reliability systems, which addresses recommendations of our external auditors," Flores said.

She also praised Lizama's team at PSS Finance.

"I really want to acknowledge the hard work of our Finance director Arlene Lizama and her incredible staff who have taken the lead and extra time in building the system. Without their help, it would not be possible at all for our school district," Flores said.

"This is a milestone for the Public School System. This is a great undertaking that took a lot of persuasion, research, and hard work by our dedicated staff into making this

*See PSS on Page 4*

# Terlaje: Net metering does not work for CUC

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Commonwealth Utilities Corp. acting executive director Betty G. Terlaje said yesterday that the net energy metering law does not work for CUC because they have had concerns since the beginning that non-net metering customers are subsidizing the net meter customers.

Terlaje said in an interview with *Saipan Tribune* that they support any mechanism that will assist CUC, but she believes the CNMI's current net metering law was designed based on another utilities' setup.

Net metering is a low-cost type of renewable energy technology that allows customers to store the energy they produce from solar panels or wind turbines and use it at their convenience and then sell any excess power they produce to CUC.

Terlaje gave this testimony yesterday before the House of Representatives Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications in relation to House Bill 23-92, which seeks to suspend the net energy metering law in the CNMI. Terlaje appeared before the committee with CUC Power Division manager Lee Lieto and CUC Energy Renewable Department engineer Adrian Reyes.

"I agree that the bill will help CUC," said Terlaje in an interview shortly after completing their testimony before the PUTC.

Under the net metering law, she said, CUC continues to credit the accounts of those who availed of the program, so they're not paying for electricity.

"And that takes away from our improvements on our power plants on the maintenance of the distribution system," Terlaje said.

Thankfully, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been quite helpful to them in restoring the electrical system during extreme storms, she said.

Terlaje diclosed during the PUTC meeting that they have about 535 active customers today under the net metering program and 50 of those are commercial and government, while the rest are residential. She said the over 500 customers produced approximately around 4.8 megawatts of power.

PUTC chair Rep. Vincent S. Aldan (Ind-Saipan), who is the author of the bill, stated during the meeting that the importance of his legislation is to create a level playing field. Aldan said in the past 10 years alone, the cost of renewable energy systems has dropped dramatically.

"It is now more affordable than it was 10 years ago," he said.

# *CUC hires company to do background check on applicants for executive director*

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

**» 22 applied for executive director position, one is qualified**

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has hired a company in the U.S. mainland to do the background check on those who applied for the executive director position.

CUC acting executive director Betty G. Terlaje also disclosed yesterday that one applicant is qualified for the position, but they're waiting for his background check.

Terlaje said once they get the background check, the CUC board will schedule an interview.

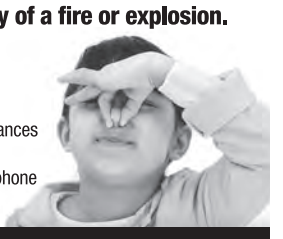
"The background check is what we're waiting for. That's ongoing right now," she said.

Terlaje said 22 applied and the one who is qualified is from the mainland.

CUC has been searching for an executive director since Gary P. Camacho resigned in February 2023. Terlaje has been serving as acting executive director for almost a year now.

ARMATECH
PABX Telephone System Installer

Tel: (670) 234-8895 | Email: armatech.saipan@gmail.com
Mobile: (670) 287-5525 / (670) 783-8895

The most common identification of a leak is SMELL.
If you smell gas, there is a possibility of a fire or explosion.
If the odor is STRONG:
1. Shut off gas if possible
2. DO NOT light matches or cigarettes
3. DO NOT operate switches or electrical appliances
4. Get everyone out of the building
5. Call the Fire Department from a neighbor's phone
6. Call Wushin LPGas Emergency Number

LP GAS WUSHIN
Since1983 Committed to Safety Excellence
322-7415/322-8733

NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE
NMTECH
P.O. Box 504880 Saipan MP 96950
Tel. No.: (670) 235-6684
Board of Trustees
Regular Board Meeting
January 9, 2024 | 4:00pm
NMTI Campus, Lower Base
I. Call to Order
II. Adoption of Agenda
III. Adoption of Meeting Minutes
IV. Public Comments
V. Old Business
A. NMTech By-Laws
B. Promulgation of Policies
C. Establishing a Foundation
D. Schedule for Quarterly Meetings
VI. New Business
A. New Programs
B. Partnerships & Initiatives
C. Updated Organizational Chart
D. FY 2024 Action Plan
E. FY 2023 Enrollment Analysis
F. FY 2023 Financial Overview | FY 2024 Financial Outlook
G. FY 2023 Citizen Centric Report
H. FY 2023 Annual Report
I. FY 2025 Budget Proposal
VII. Committee Updates
A. Finance/Personnel
B. Programs
C. Foundation
VIII. Sub-Committee Updates
A. EDA Workforce Training Facility Construction Project
IX. Executive Session
X. Announcements
XI. Adjournment

HONDA
2023 CR-V CLEARANCE
Honda SENSING INCLUDED
CITY/HWY MPG RATING 28/34
RECEIVE A $1,000 SHOPPING SPREE
No. 0001 $1000 JOETEN SHOPPING SPREE with purchase of any new or used car
PARTICIPATING STORES
Starting at $229* per paycheck*
FREE TINT & ZIEBART UNDERCOATING | 1 YEAR FREE GOLD SERVICE
EX/EX-L TRIMS AVAILABLE
Visit us at www.joetenmotors.com • Tel. (670) 234-5562
SHOWROOM HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 8AM - 5PM • SATURDAY 8AM - 12PM
Vehicle may not be exactly as shown • *Some conditions apply • While Supplies last.
Joeten Motors POWERED BY YOU
Like us on Facebook
2023 HONDA CR-V EX at $36,795 + Doc Fees with 20% down at 6% APR for 72 Months at 26 pay periods per year O.A.C. Deferred financing $35,714.16 while supplies last.

## HOMICIDE

*From page 1*

Yesterday, the Department of Public Safety and Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services responded to a call reporting two injured individuals at a residence in Finasisu. However, when they got there, they were met with a shocking discovery. At the scene, first responders found two unresponsive individuals.

*Saipan Tribune* learned that the scene was described as "gruesome."

DPS has since deemed the incident a homicide and is asking for the community's help in identifying possible suspects.

"The incident is now classified as a homicide. One male victim is deceased. The female victim is in critical condition," said DPS spokesperson Sgt. Fred Sato.

The police declined to release any details about who may have called DPS, nor gave additional details as to what prompted them to now consider this a homicide case.

According to a DPS news release, DPS dispatch received at around 10:46am yesterday, Jan. 4, an injured person(s) report at the former Ladera Building along Tun Joaquin Doi Road in Finasisu, which used to house a school.

Officers arrived at the Ladera Building at approximately 11:02am and discovered an unresponsive Asian male, around 30 to 40 years old, and an unresponsive female that was also around 30 to 40 years old.

DPS notes that initial observation indicates both individuals had extensive injuries.

The two were immediately rushed to the Commonwealth Health Center where the male was pronounced dead, having succumbed to his injuries.

*Saipan Tribune* learned as of press time that the female victim is alive but remains in critical condition.

DPS says the case remains an ongoing investigation.

*Saipan Tribune* visited the scene and police tape had blocked off the entrance to the road leading to the victims' residence.

DPS is also asking the community to provide any information they may have regarding the incident that could possibly lead to an arrest.

"If you have any information or have seen anything occurring within the area, please call DPS criminal investigation Bureau at (670) 664-9042. If you wish to remain anonymous, you can call the Crime Stoppers hotline at (670) 234-7272," said DPS.

## ARRESTED

*From page 1*

he tried to flee the scene when police conducted a traffic stop and asked him for his license.

According to the DPS' statement, a patrol officer noticed at around 4:48pm last Wednesday, Jan. 3, a yellow Ford Mustang that was weaving in and out of the northbound and southbound inner lanes of Chalan Pale Arnold in Garapan.

The officer pulled over the vehicle on the shoulder of the northbound lane near the Commonwealth Health Center. The officer then approached the driver and explained the reason for the stop. However, the driver, a 38-year-old Asian male, reportedly became upset and informed the officer that he didn't have his driver's license with him and was on his way home.

DPS said that, as the officer continued questioning the driver, the driver suddenly turned on the car's engine and tried to flee. The officer quickly opened the driver's door and tried to turn off the car engine and a struggle ensued.

A second officer arrived on scene to assist but the driver allegedly continued to resist arrest.

During the struggle, DPS said, the driver kicked the officer conducting the traffic stop in the stomach.

As the struggle continued, another officer and two off-duty law enforcement officers arrived to help restrain the "uncooperative and combative" driver.

The officers were able to subdue the driver, and place him in handcuffs. He was secured in the patrol car and was taken to the Department of Corrections to be booked and detained.

## OGUMORO

*From page 1*

for over 50 years.

It was not immediately learned what caused Ogumoro's death, but she had underlying medical conditions.

Palacios and Apatang shared the news of Ogumoro's death in a news statement yesterday, saying it is with profound sadness that they share the news of the passing of a true pioneer and Marianas daughter.

Palacios and Apatang said Ogumoro dedicated her life to public service and whose positive, indelible impact in the CNMI continues to resonate today.

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) said that she and Ogumoro, whom she described as a beautiful woman, remained friends to the end.

DeLeon Guerrero said her first encounter with Ogumoro goes way back during her publishing company days, when Ogumoro was still publishing a magazine. DeLeon Guerrero said she asked if she could include an article on investments in Ogumoro's magazine in line with the Women's Month celebration. DeLeon Guerrero said she wanted to do something for CNMI women and brought in her investment advisor friends to help.

"I will miss he and the foresight discussions we always had when we met or run into each other. May she rest in peace," DeLeon Guerrero said.

House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) also expressed his condolences and prayers to the family.

He described Ogumoro as a trailblazer and a role model to those who got into or want to get into public service.

"I was very fortunate to have served a couple of terms with her," he said.

The speaker said he always mentions the community center that they opened as one of the highlights of his time in office and that Ogumoro was the lead in that project.

"She was a strong voice for our people. She will be greatly missed. May she rest in peace," Villagomez said.

In their statement, Palacios and Apatang said Ogumoro was a trailblazing woman whose legacy included her election as one of the first women to serve in the CNMI House of Representatives, her advocacy for the establishment and long-term sustainability of Commonwealth institutions that include the Northern Marianas College, Division of Youth Services, and the Women's Affairs Office, and other agencies and organizations "that have made a profound difference in the lives of so many residents."

They said Ogumoro—or "Daling" as she was affectionately called by many community members—was a force for positive change and a relentless champion for the advancement of the women's movement.

"Throughout her impressive career, she demonstrated unparalleled commitment and passion for the well-being of our people," Palacios and Apatang said.

As a legislator, they said, Ogumoro spearheaded initiatives that reshaped the islands' landscape, championing causes that emphasized the importance of education and access to high quality programs and services.

They said Ogumoro's legislative accomplishments were a testament to her unwavering dedication to creating a better future for the people.

Palacios and Apatang said Ogumoro fearlessly broke barriers, shattered glass ceilings, and inspired countless individuals to dream big and strive for equality, and that her legacy will continue to inspire generations of women to come.

"Let us remember Ms. Ogumoro not only for her remarkable achievements but also for the kindness, compassion, and impactful leadership she brought to every endeavor. In this moment of sorrow, let us come together as a community to honor her memory," they said.

In December 2021, the House presented a House resolution that paid tribute and commended Ogumoro for more than 50 years of distinguished service to the people of the Commonwealth. Rep. Denita Kaipat Yangetmai (D-Saipan) was the principal author of that resolution.

Ogumoro's family members received the resolution on her behalf as she had underlying medical conditions at the time. She, however, sent a recorded message.

Ogumoro, in her message that was played in the House chamber, stated she is humbled by the resolution and that when she first returned to serve in the Legislature after a 30-year absence, her mission was two-pronged: to safeguard the right of the CNMI to govern itself and to work to improve people's quality of life.

In 1980, Ogumoro was elected to serve a second term in the House. During her tenure in the House, she was the author of Public Law 2-19, which established the Division of Youth Services; was a staunch supporter of Executive Order No. 25, which established the Northern Marianas College; and was a member of the House Policy Committee for the new Commonwealth Health Center.

In 1982, she ventured into the private sector and held various programs and management positions.

In 1985, Ogumoro was elected a delegate to the 2nd Constitutional Convention. She was the author of Constitutional Amendment 21, establishing the Office of Special Assistant for Women's Affairs; Constitutional Amendment 38, making the NMC autonomous and guaranteeing it 1% funding; and Constitutional Amendment 38, making the Public School System autonomous and guaranteeing it 15% funding.

She was elected in the House representing Precinct 3 in 2010. She became a member of the House in the 17th, 18th, and 19th Legislatures.

## CRUISE

*From page 1*

Dive companies, tour guides, and Mañagaha charters were also lined up at the port, ready to accommodate the visitors.

According to Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepcion, *Bellissima*'s visit provided a much-needed boost to the CNMI's business community.

"The MVA is very excited by the visit of MSC *Bellissima* to the Marianas today. This sudden influx of nearly 4,000 Japanese visitors plus more than 1,300 crew is awesome and provides a much-needed boost for the business community and the tourism industry as a whole," he said.

According to Concepcion, MVA, the Commonwealth Ports Authority, and other stakeholders have been working together for months in preparation for *Bellissima*'s visit and it was worth it.

"The MVA has been meeting the last few months with CPA and other stakeholders, namely Tasi Tours and JTB, who are the lead coordinators and ground handlers for this cruise ship. We've arranged for MVA members to offer discounts or complimentary gifts exclusively for MCS *Bellissima* passengers. Many businesses in Garapan opened early to welcome our guests to their shops. We provided a welcome and farewell greeting with Chamorro and Carolinian performers and invited food and arts and crafts vendors to sell unique Marianas products," he said.

As for excursions, Concepcion said about 1,066 passengers were confirmed for a Managaha trip, 550 confirmed for sightseeing trips, 144 made various hotel waterpark visits, 34 opted for a cultural exhibit at a Garapan resort, 250 went out for lunch at a Garapan hotel, and many more signed up for other activities.

"We understand that many [others roamed] Garapan and the rest of the island on their own. Saipan is very familiar for most Japanese. The MVA provided portalets (portable toilets) at Last Command Post and an additional one at the Saipan Seaport. We thank JTB, Tasi Tours and MSC *Bellissima* for their visit and invite them to make Saipan and the Marianas a regular port of call," he said.

In a statement from *Bellissima* captain Francesco Veniero, he said he is grateful for the opportunity to visit the Marianas.

"This is the first time in my life that I've [visited] Saipan and I'm very happy to see this island and meet the people. It was quite a challenge this morning to approach this port because the channel was very narrow. I believe this is the largest vessel to enter this port and it is my honor to bring this ship to Saipan. The vessel is a very beautiful vessel. It's owned by the MSC. The company has 23 cruise ships just like this one. This vessel's capacity is about 6,000 passengers and about 1,500 crew members. It's a big honor to captain a ship with this many people. For me, it has been my dream to be on a vessel like this, but I never imagined I'd be on a vessel like this on Saipan," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the people of the CNMI, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios thanks the MSC *Bellissima* for visiting the CNMI.

"We welcome you, and our visitors to Saipan. We thank you for visiting us. We want to make sure that your experience, albeit one day, is memorable and we hope your guests also enjoy their day on Saipan. Again, on behalf of our people, welcome to Saipan," he said.

Lt. Gov. David Apatang echoed Palacios' sentiment and said he hopes that the B*ellissima* returns to Saipan for another visit in the future.

"Congratulations for navigating the channel here. Even the military sometimes must turn around so many times just to come in here and you did it. We want to say thank you to your crew and for all the visitors you brought to the CNMI. We appreciate that and we hope you can remember to visit us again. We have many islands here in the CNMI that you would surely enjoy. We have the beautiful islands of Rota, Tinian, and the Northern Islands. Hopefully you'd think about coming again soon and bringing in a couple of more ships to visit us. We love and welcome you," he said.

The MSC *Bellissima* has a total capacity for over 7,000 persons.

## PSS

*From page 2*

possible. This is as a result of taking the right direction with technology," she added.

PSS began looking at investing in a modern and automated system three years ago by looking at digital transformation that relied less on paperwork.

"Definitely, the Tyler Enterprise ERP System will streamline all financial system, especially budgeting and forecasting for PSS," said Lizama.

"This raises our level of accountability by providing more transparency in what we do," Lizama added. ***(PR)***

Customers First TRIPLE J Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store

# SAVE MORE IN 2024!

PROMO DURATION: January 5-11, 2024

LIMITED EDITION ECO BAG 700 POINTS

HOME GYM SYSTEM SIZE: 180*100*203CM 110KG
NOW! $399.95
WAS: $649.95

PROFORM BODY BLITZ RESISTANCE EXERCISE SYSTEM
NOW! $299.95
WAS: $399.95

ELECTRIC TREADMILL
NOW! $299.95
WAS: $419.95

BARBASOL FULL BODY SHAVER
NOW! $13.95
WAS: $15.95

PULL UP BAR SIZE: 93*72*62CM 10KG
NOW! $39.95
WAS: $65.95

GEO 25OZ DW 304 SS WATER BOTTLE W/POP-UP CAP
NOW! $19.95
WAS: $22.95

ADJUSTABLE WEIGHT BENCH SIZE:1980X1700X1
NOW! $109.95
WAS: $136.95

WAHL CLIP&TRIM 20PC HAIR CLIPPER MADE IN USA
NOW! $61.95
WAS: $68.95

YESCOM 58CM FITNESS YOGA HALF-BALL BALANCE WORKOUT
NOW! $49.95
WAS: $75.95

NAPA BARREL 12.8IN KENTUCKY WALNUT RESIN PLANTER
NOW! $17.95
WAS: $19.95

SAMSUNG HEADSET W/BLUETOOTH 4.1 GREEN
NOW! $29.95
WAS: $49.95

SS ECG & PPG SMART SPORTS WATCH W/BLUETOOTH
NOW! $79.95
WAS: $99.95

OMEGA 1HP JUICE EXTRACTOR
NOW! $49.95
WAS: $71.95

DAHDOUL - FAUX WOOD BLINDS 2" CORDLESS 40"X64"
NOW! $37.95
WAS: $42.95

HOME BASICS - BATH SHELF W/ TOWEL BAR
NOW! $37.95
WAS: $41.95

STERILITE 62L LAUNDRY BASKET W/WHEELS
NOW! $23.95
WAS: $26.95

GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM

# EARN DOUBLE POINTS

CHICKEN THIGH
NOW! $2.59 /LB
WAS: $2.99

HOFFY DELITE SMOKED BACON 12OZ
NOW! $5.99
WAS: $6.99

PEPPERIDGE FARM GARLIC BREAD 10OZ
NOW! $4.19
WAS: $4.79

DAISY SQUEEZE SOUR CREAM 14OZ
NOW! $3.99
WAS: $4.59

BELGIOIOSO PARMESAN WEDGE 8OZ
NOW! $4.99
WAS: $5.79

BUSSETO PROSCIUTTO SLICE 3OZ
NOW! $4.49
WAS: $5.19

CAB PORTER HOUSE
NOW! $16.29 /LB
WAS: $18.69

RED CABBAGE
NOW! $0.99 /LB
WAS: $2.59

USA PRIME PORKLOIN BONELESS STEAK
NOW! $4.39 /LB
WAS: $4.99

RED POTATO
NOW! $0.99 /LB
WAS: $1.89

BUTTERNUT SQUASH
NOW! $1.25 /LB
WAS: $2.49

SWEET POTATO
NOW! $1.39 /LB
WAS: $2.79

LIMES
NOW! $1.99 /LB
WAS: $2.59

RED DELICIOUS APPLE 3LB BAG
NOW! $6.99 BAG
WAS: $8.39

HILLSHIRE SAUSAGE HOT SMOKED ROPE 14OZ
NOW! $6.79
WAS: $7.79

KRAFT COLBY JACK CHEESE STICK 2OZ
NOW! $1.89
WAS: $2.09

MRS. F REESES CHOCOLATE CUPCAKE 13OZ
NOW! $4.19
WAS: $4.79

MRS. FRIDAY'S HOMESTYLE BREADED SHRIMP 48OZ
NOW! $34.49
WAS: $39.59

ESSENTIAL EVERYDAY GREEN SPLIT PEAS 32OZ
NOW! $3.99
WAS: $4.49

SPANGLISH ASADERO BOLD CITRUS MARINADE 10OZ
NOW! $12.59
WAS: $14.39

Customers First! Rewards Plus

# EXPLORE YOUR REWARDS!

EXCLUSIVE OFFERS FOR PAYLESS SUPERFRESH REWARDS MEMBERS!

PROGRESSO SPICY CHICKEN TORTILLA SOUP 18.5OZ
WAS: $6.79
600 POINTS

MORTON ICE CREAM SALT 4LBS
WAS: $2.99
200 POINTS

PRINGLES CHEDDAR CHEESE CRISP 5.5OZ
WAS: $3.79
300 POINTS

BUGLES ORIGINAL SNACKS 7.5OZ
WAS: $6.99
600 POINTS

YOGA BLOCK ASSORTED 3X6X9
WAS: $5.95
535 POINTS

DAHDOUL - EMBROIDERED BATH TOWEL
WAS: $6.95
625 POINTS

PYREX PIE PLATE EASY GRAB 6/1CT
WAS: $7.89
700 POINTS

WE ACCEPT FOODSTAMPS! Tel: (670) 234-1444 @paylesssuperfreshtruckloadstore Open 7AM-9PM Daily

GUANGDONG HARDWARE
Never satisfied until you are
ON SALE
REGULAR US LUMBER, RED PLYFORM, "24X24" CERAMIC TILES, PVC S40 CONDUIT, PVC S80 WATER FITTINGS,
AVAILABLE NOW
SALE ITEMS!

Make a Difference for Your House!
NEW ARRIVALS!
CARPOLY PAINT
It's the suitable paint for the island climate.
Make your paint last for a long time!

1 FREE T-shirt with one time purchase of two buckets of
CARPOLY
Professional Paint Solution Provider
First Come First Served, While Stocks Last
LED LIGHTS
• Less money, 50% energy saving!
• More stable, bright, and fashionable!
• More longer and environmental protection!
Your Smart Choice!
G60 Rebar is Available Now!
CHEAPEST DEALER OF MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL ON ISLAND!
P.O. BOX 501640, SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 288-2288/2289/6688
FAX: 288-4488
E-mail:guangdong_hardware@163.com
BUSINESS HOURS:
Monday to Saturday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

# Chamber thanks Triple J Saipan for donation

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce extends its sincere appreciation to Triple J Saipan, Inc., a valued Chamber member, for their gracious contribution of $3,000 for the 2023 Annual Business Person of the Year Gala.

Triple J Saipan, Inc. has consistently shown dedication to the Chamber's initiatives during past events, and the Chamber expresses gratitude for their ongoing support.

The Annual Business Person of the Year Gala is one of the Chamber's signature events of the year. It is scheduled to take place on Saturday, Jan. 27, 2024, at the Kensington Hall, Kensington Hotel Saipan, with the theme "Hafa Adai yan Tirow."

The Chamber invites businesses and organizations to join Triple J Saipan, Inc. in supporting this event. Sponsorship opportunities are available, and interested parties can contact the Chamber office at (670) 234-7150 or via email at contactus@saipanchamber.org.

The Chamber looks forward to a successful gala, celebrating and recognizing outstanding individuals and organizations within the business community and fostering a sense of camaraderie among its members.

For more information about the gala or to RSVP your seat, visit https://business.saipanchamber.com/events/details/2023-annual-business-person-of-the-year-gala-3557?calendarMonth=2024-01-01. ***(PR)***

# Calvo Enterprises Inc. acquires Tokio Marine Pacific Insurance

## » Company name changes to Calvo's SelectCare Insurance, Inc.

**HAGÅTÑA, Guam**—Calvo Enterprises, Inc. and Calvo Trusts Corp., collectively called Calvo's SelectCare, announced yesterday their successful acquisition of Tokio Marine Pacific Insurance. This strategic move solidifies Calvo's commitment to enhancing its market presence and provides a broader offering of high-quality products and services to its customers. TMPI's name has formally changed to Calvo's SelectCare Insurance, Inc.

The acquisition of TMPI brings together two leaders in the insurance industry. Their combined expertise creates a stronger portfolio of insurance products and capabilities that will benefit customers, stakeholders, and Guam's ever-evolving market. Calvo's remains dedicated to maintaining the highest quality standards, customer satisfaction, and corporate responsibility throughout this exciting new chapter.

CEI board members Leonard P. Calvo, Eduardo "Jake" Calvo, and former governor Edward "Eddie" Baza Calvo anticipate that the acquisition of Calvo's SelectCare Insurance will further the mission of CEI to contribute meaningfully to the health of the Pacific Island communities of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

"This is an exciting new era for our company. While we have been serving the people of Guam for more than eight decades, we continue to grow and find ways to innovate for the future to better serve our customers and the community," said Leonard P. Calvo, chairman and President of Calvo's Enterprises, Inc.

Paul A. Calvo, president and CEO of CIU and vice president of CEI, said, "We are proud to confirm that we have fully acquired TMPI, which is now known as Calvo's SelectCare Insurance, Inc. We thank TMPI for their tenure here [in] Guam and their partnership throughout the acquisition process to ensure a smooth transition. The Calvo's team looks forward to celebrating the new year, also our 85th anniversary, with even more possibilities to support our customers and build upon our legacy of trust."

Frank J. Campillo, the new president of Calvo's SelectCare Insurance, Inc., said, "We want to assure our customers that, although the name has changed, our health insurance customers, policyholders, and stakeholders can rely on the same quality service they know and love. The only real change is that our operations will be led and managed locally by a team that calls Guam home."

For more information about the acquisition, visit calvos.com. ***(PR)***

**DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES**
**CNMI GOVERNMENT**

**INVITATION TO BID**
**ITB NO.: ITB24-DPW/ED-42400027**

**SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.**

**"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR DPW, ENERGY DIVISION"**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

**QUESTIONS** REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS - ENERGY DIVISION BY JANUARY 26, 2024, TO, MR. VINCENT ATTAO VIA EMAIL AT v.attao@cnmienergy.gov.mp

**THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.**

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

**/S/ THELMA B. INOS**
**DIRECTOR,**
**DPW-ENERGY DIVISION**

**/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.**
**ACTING DIRECTOR, PS**

**JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**
**ONE (1) INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST**

**DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:**
Set up equipment for employees use, performing or ensuring proper installation of cables, operating systems, or appropriate software; Develop training materials and procedures, or train users in the proper use of hardware or software; Assemble; install; configure and test computer and CCTV equipment or units of local area networks requiring the use of standard interface protocols; Refer major hardware or software problems or defective products to vendors or technicians for services; Maintain records of daily data communication transactions; problems and remedial actions taken, or installation activities; Answer user inquiries regarding computer software or hardware operation to resolve problems; Read technical manuals, confer with users, or conduct computer diagnostics to investigate and resolve problems or to provide technical assistance and support; Confer with staff, users and management to establish requirements for new systems or modifications; Ensure that new hardware or software systems or components integrate with existing network system; Modify and customize commercial programs for internal needs; Conduct office automation feasibility studies, including workflow analysis, space design, or cost comparison analysis; Oversee daily performance of computer systems; Analyze, test, troubleshoot and evaluate existing network systems, such as local area networks (LAN). Perform network maintenance to ensure networks operate correctly with minimal interruption; Configure and setup servers to work with various programs; install software to ensure server backups and network user backups are performed on a daily basis; Analyze network data to determine network usage, disk space availability, or server function; Fabricate cables for use in interfacing peripherals with computers, other peripherals and networks; Develop and maintain database setup of system software and hardware, install hubs and switches on the network, maintain networks and troubleshoot programs; Keep updated knowledge about emerging industry or technology trends; Perform other related duties as needed.

**DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS:**
- Bachelor's Degree in Computer Technology or similar field. Foreign equivalent is acceptable;
- 5 years' experience in computer network/information technology and must be knowledgeable with major hotel computer operating systems.

**Interested individuals please send your resume with a list of references, photocopy of a valid photo identification card & updated police clearance to:**

Dong Hwan Lee, Human Resource Director
Suwaso Corporation dba Coral Ocean Resort
4940 As Gonno Rd., Koblerville
P.O. Box 501160
Saipan, MP 96950
Contact no. 1 (670) 237-5051
E-mail: hr@coraloceansaipan.com

WE ARE AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

**COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY**
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM • WEBSITE: HTTPS: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

**Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport**
**"Car Rental Concession"**

**Request for Proposals**
**for: CPA-RFP-001-24**
**CPA Concession No. CRS-2023-01**

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of two years with an option upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-Concession No. CRS-2023-01 is **December 6, 2023**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on January 9, 2024**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of $100.00. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, or cashier's check payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

/s/
LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

**COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY**
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

**REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES**

**CHARLIE DOCK EXTENSION PROJECT**
**PORT OF SAIPAN**
**PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-001-24**

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Charlie Dock Extension Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-001-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, January 12, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: December 20, 2023

# Scheduled power service interruptions for Jan. 4-9

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public that there will be scheduled power service interruptions from Jan. 4 to 9, 2024, as CUC continues its ongoing system maintenance.

**Thursday, Jan. 4, 2024**
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am to 2:30pm

- Area(s) Affected: Afetnas (Pios Dr. and Palos Ln.)

Momentary Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am to 11:30am

- Area(s) Affected: Afetnas (Pios Dr., Palos Ln., Toson Dr., Tiao Ln., Uahu L., and Gadao Ln.)
- Water Wells Affected: None
- Wasterwater Facilities Affected: None
- Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
- Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace five 45-foot concrete power poles with 40-foot concrete poles

**Saturday, Jan. 6, 2024**
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am to 11:30am

- Area(s) Affected: Susupe (West Coast Restaurant)
- Water Well(s) Affected: None
- Wastewater Facilities Affected: None
- Traffic Light(s) Affected: None
- Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to relocate four power poles under the DPW Route 33 project.

**Tuesday, Jan. 9, 2024**
Power Service Interruption Time: 8:30am to 3:30pm.

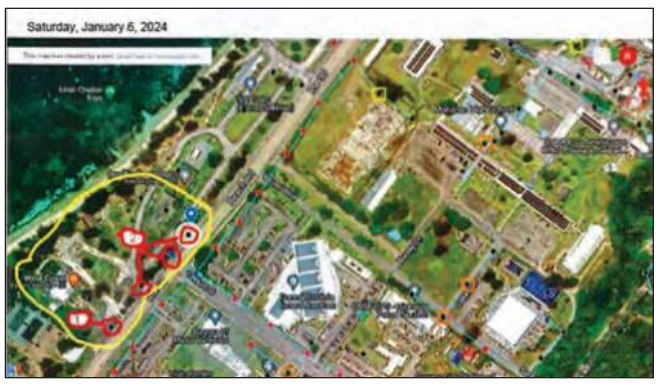
- Area(s) Affected: CUC Lab and Water Division, Puerto Rico, and Sadog Tasi Treatment Plant
- Water Wells) Affected: PR-164
- Wasterwater Facilities Affected: Sadog Tasi Treatment Plant
- Traffic Light(s) Affected: None

Momentary Power Service Interruption Time 8:30am to 9am and 3pm to 3:30pm.

- Area(s) Affected: Lower Base (CUC Power Plant-1 and DFW), CUC Lab and Water Division, Puerto Rico, Sadog Tasi Treatment Plant, and Lower Navy Hill
- Water Wells) Affected: PR-164
- Wasterwater Facilities Affected: S-1, S-3, and Sadog Tasi Treatment Plant
- Traffic Light(s) Affected: Puerto Rico and Lower Navy Hill
- Purpose: To allow the CUC linemen to replace four 45-foot wooden power poles to concrete poles.

CUC appreciates the public's cooperation and understanding as we continue to provide reliable service to our customers.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact our hotline at (670) 236-4333, or visit our website and monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates. ***(CUC)***




CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 6, 2024.

CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 9, 2024.

CUC
Map of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s scheduled power service interruption on Jan. 4, 2024.

## EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS

**5.2-magnitude earthquake on Maug**
At 7:12am on Jan. 4, 2024, a 5.2-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Maug Islands Region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

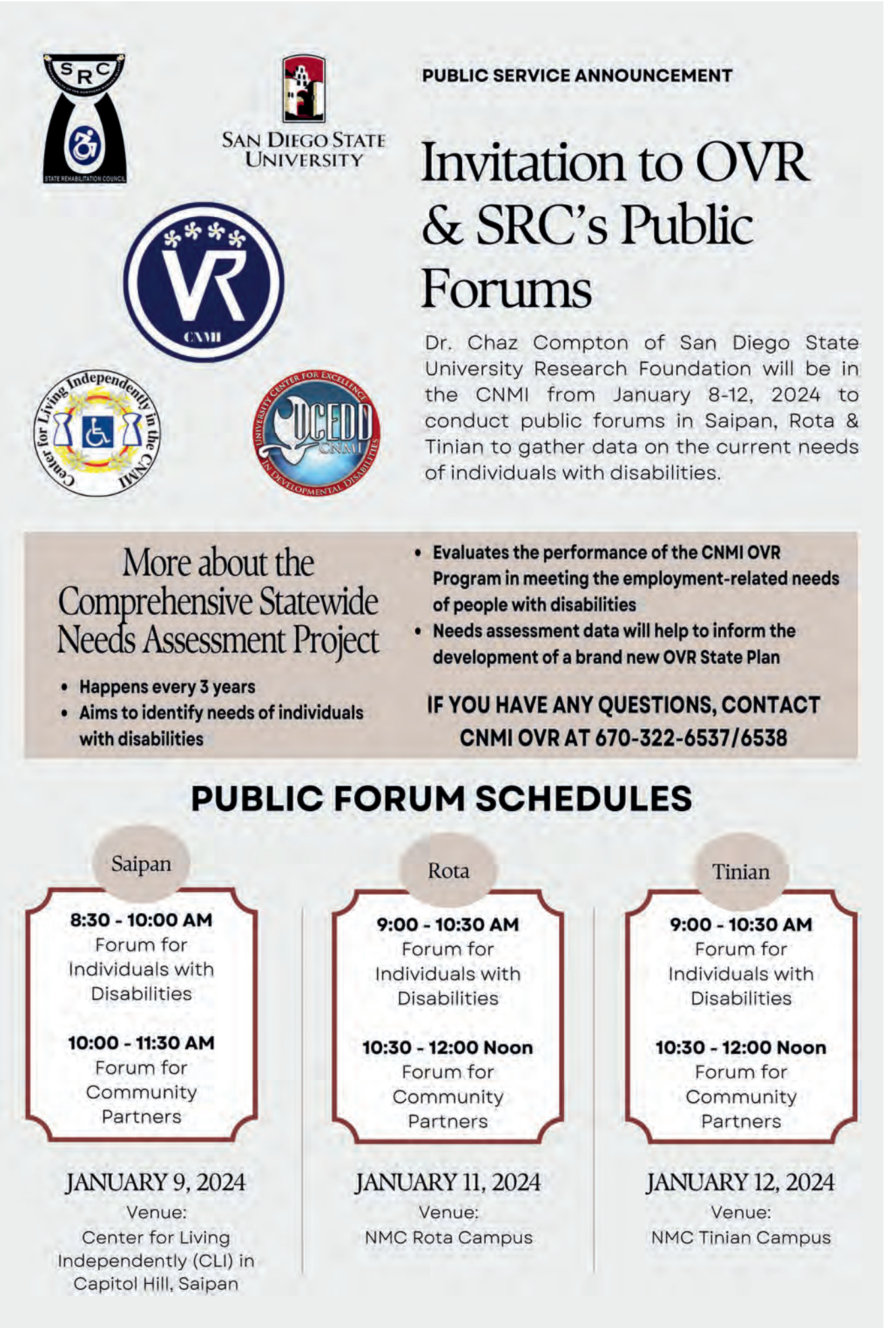
For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

**5.1-magnitude earthquake on Maug**
At 6:32am on Jan. 4, 2024, a 5.1-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Maug Islands Region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

**4.6-magnitude earthquake on Saipan**
At 10:37am on Jan. 1, 2024, a 4.6-magnitude earthquake occurred north of Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***



SRC
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT
Invitation to OVR & SRC's Public Forums
Dr. Chaz Compton of San Diego State University Research Foundation will be in the CNMI from January 8-12, 2024 to conduct public forums in Saipan, Rota & Tinian to gather data on the current needs of individuals with disabilities.
VR CNMI
Center for Living Independently in the CNMI
UCEDD CNMI
More about the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Project
Happens every 3 years
Aims to identify needs of individuals with disabilities
Evaluates the performance of the CNMI OVR Program in meeting the employment-related needs of people with disabilities
Needs assessment data will help to inform the development of a brand new OVR State Plan
IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT CNMI OVR AT 670-322-6537/6538
PUBLIC FORUM SCHEDULES
Saipan
8:30 - 10:00 AM Forum for Individuals with Disabilities
10:00 - 11:30 AM Forum for Community Partners
JANUARY 9, 2024
Venue: Center for Living Independently (CLI) in Capitol Hill, Saipan
Rota
9:00 - 10:30 AM Forum for Individuals with Disabilities
10:30 - 12:00 Noon Forum for Community Partners
JANUARY 11, 2024
Venue: NMC Rota Campus
Tinian
9:00 - 10:30 AM Forum for Individuals with Disabilities
10:30 - 12:00 Noon Forum for Community Partners
JANUARY 12, 2024
Venue: NMC Tinian Campus

# CNMI participates in historic US territory summit in NYC

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO//

Representatives of the CNMI, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands gathered in New York City in October 2023 for the first "Summit on U.S. Colonialism."

The Right to Democracy, a national nonprofit organization, convened representatives from all five U.S. territories for the "Summit on U.S. Colonialism" in New York City last October 2023 in the first such gathering of civil society from the territories since 1994.

Cultural leaders, artists, lawyers, and academics from all the territories built community with one another and strategized unifying themes and solutions for advancing democracy, equity, and self-determination.

Our island home in the Marianas exists on a delicate balance. A balance between the island environment—its lands, seas, and skies—and its people. However, our people know, perhaps too well, that outside forces often have an outsized impact on this balance. More specifically, the decisions of U.S. government officials and the acute lack of awareness many have about the Marianas.

However, such a plight is not unique to the CNMI, or even the Marianas. All five of the inhabited, yet unincorporated U.S. territories—the CNMI, Guam, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—face this same issue. And the same question of how to respond to such a challenge has continually been asked arguably since the first U.S. territories came into existence in 1898. Conversations about this issue have been had in many spaces in the Marianas over the years.

Yet rarely has there been a move to gather all the territories together in a single shared space to tackle the systemically racist nature of American second-class citizenship.

The CNMI team shared the Chamorro concept of *"ina-fa'maolek"*—roughly translated as "to make good"; in other words, reciprocity. The CNMI team highlighted this idea to demonstrate the irony that the U.S.' relationships to all its territories are imbalanced and not reciprocal. People in the territories have been disproportionately impacted by U.S. militarization, environmental pollution, lack of voting rights, rising sea levels, and more frequent and intense tropical storms, among other issues.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI team included MANGO executive director Frances Sablan; Labor Secretary Leila Staffler; Mt. Carmel School educator Zeno Deleon Guerrero, Northern Marianas College professor William Fife; and former lawmaker Sheila Babauta.

A common thread amongst all the territories to address such imbalance is the need for more solidarity and to build stronger relationship networks between the territories. The territories have common challenges, but each also have a unique history, people, and culture that must be acknowledged.

In addition to working with one another, these territorial representatives also spoke with major foundations to raise awareness to the harsh realities that second-class citizenship poses to Americans that result from living without voting rights.

Co-sponsors of the summit included the Ford Foundation, Democracy Fund, and J.M. Kaplan Fund, with support as well from Covington & Burling LLP.

Learning about the similarities and differences between the territories was a healing experience for many, with various attendees moved to tears as emotions ran high from the intergenerational trauma rooted in genocidal colonialism and slavery. For advocates that have worked on ending U.S. colonialism for decades, as well as for people just learning about second-class citizenship, the summit was also at times a form of group therapy to know that they are not fighting these battles alone. The days of isolation into territorial silos separated by oceans are over, as the leveling influence of the internet is the key difference from 1994. Working together over thousands of miles and time zones via Zoom meetings or other social media mediums brings optimism and light to replace pessimism and darkness for those dedicated to democracy and self-determination.

As historic as the two-day "Summit on U.S. Colonialism" was for the territories, attendees are excited to continue their advocacy. The territorial stakeholders are already working on next steps to continue raising awareness, building alliances, and exploring creative ways to achieve self-determination for all territories and an end to second-class citizenship. Although the end product might be different for each of the territories, all agree to leverage democratic means to end systemically racist colonial structures in place for more than 100 years.

The CNMI team's diverse representatives included local cultural icon and MANGO executive director Frances Sablan; former lawmaker and current Labor Secretary Leila Staffler; Mt. Carmel School educator Zeno Deleon Guerrero, Northern Marianas College professor William Fife; and community advocate and former lawmaker Sheila Babauta. ***(PR)***

### AFTER EXPOSING WORKERS TO AMPUTATION HAZARDS

## Pepsi Guam Bottling agrees to pay $132K in penalties — OSHA

**TAMUNING, Guam**—The U.S. Department of Labor has reached a settlement agreement with Pepsi Guam Bottling after an inspection by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration found the company exposed employees to amputation and other serious injuries.

The settlement with OSHA before the independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission required Pepsi Guam Bottling to pay $132,591 in penalties, abate the safety failures found in OSHA's investigation and implement a comprehensive safety and health program to protect workers moving forward. An independent federal agency, OSHRC decides contested citations or penalties OSHA issues to employers after workplace inspections.

- **Company implements enhanced workplace safety program**
- **Settlement includes creation of joint employee-management safety committee**

The agreement to enhance its safety culture requires Pepsi Guam Bottling to:

- Develop a written, comprehensive safety and health program.
- Allow a warrantless inspection of the facility, to be completed within the next 12 months.
- Form a safety and health committee between management and employees.
- Provide heat stress training to its employees.

"Pepsi Guam Bottling's agreement to boost its workplace safety protocols will help protect employees and put workers on an equal footing thanks to their inclusion in a new safety and health committee," explained OSHA Regional Administrator James Wulff in San Francisco. "OSHA will closely monitor the terms of this settlement agreement and provide any assistance needed or required to ensure compliance."

"Empowering workers to take action on workplace safety is critically important," said Regional Solicitor Marc Pilotin in San Francisco. "The creation of a joint employee-management safety committee to improve this company's safety culture in Guam will be crucial to prevent avoidable injuries or calamities."

The settlement follows an OSHA inspection in October 2022 that determined the employer exposed workers to amputation and other serious injuries by leaving the machines' guard doors open and permitting a safety proximity switch to be deactivated. The agency found the company failed to protect workers from operating machine parts and proposed penalties totaling $180,807 for one willful violation, one repeat violation and six serious violations. ***(USDOL)***

**BEACH CLEANUP**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/

Staff of Kensington Hotel Saipan, Saipan Adventure, Sweet Lane, tourists, and other volunteers conducted a cleanup of Bird Island Beach last month.

# Mariana Islands Conservation Conference on Saipan next month

Tåno Tåsi yan Todu invites the local community to attend the sixth Mariana Islands Conservation Conference.

As always, the event is free and open to the public and will be live streamed for those who cannot attend in person. More than 250 students, researchers, natural resource managers, environmental advocates, and community members from Guåhan and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and various non-profit, academic, and governmental institutions participate annually.

This year, the conference will be held on Saipan from Feb. 25 to March 1.

Established in 2017, the event fosters collaboration across the archipelago and shares the most recent advances in environmental conservation and restoration.

"While Guam and the CNMI are separated politically, the conference creates a space for CHamoru and Refaluwasch people and members of the local community to gather and discuss strategies to protect and restore land and marine resources, as well as associated challenges," said board member Tina Sablan.

The conference was formerly called the "Marianas Terrestrial Conservation Conference," but this year, the focus of the conference expanded to include projects and policy initiatives to protect and restore marine resources as well, and thus, the name of the event was changed accordingly. "We are excited to include stakeholders dedicated to safeguarding and repairing marine and coral reef systems this year," said board member Dr. Haldre Rogers.

The weeklong event will include research presentations, scientific posters, professional development activities, and a career fair focused on jobs in conservation.

Attendees will learn firsthand about efforts to restore populations of the Nosa' in Luta, and other birds and animals native to the Mariana Islands. A particular highlight of the MICC are the field trips, which provide opportunities to visit and learn about coral reefs, limestone forests, and ongoing conservation projects with knowledgeable guides. While attendance is free, TTT encourages the community to register soon for the five-day event to receive updates in advance of the conference.

Tåno, Tåsi, yan Todu is still accepting abstracts for 15-minute oral presentations and scientific posters. Abstracts should convey research results, provide updates on conservation projects, share policy achievements, or present traditional knowledge.

The deadline to submit abstracts is Monday, Jan. 8, however, if additional time is needed, please contact TTT.

TTT thanks the Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program, Saint Louis Zoo, Sedgwick County Zoo, and the Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography for their generous support, and we welcome additional donors to sponsor various events, during the conference either through a financial donation or in-kind support. Interested individuals or companies should contact us at the email below.

To register for the conference, submit an abstract, or learn more, visit https://www.marianasterrestrialconservation.org. Contact us at tanotasitodu@gmail.com for questions and further discussions about the event. ***(PR)***

# APAFS sets new fiduciary standards at 21st PRIConference

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The 21st Annual Pacific Region Investment Conference was packed with almost 300 passionate fiduciary delegates.

**MANILA, Philippines—** From Nov. 27 to Dec. 1, the Asia Pacific Association for Fiduciary Studies marked another significant milestone as they held the Fiduciary Events Week with the much-anticipated Annual Pacific Region Investment Conference at New World Hotel Makati in Manila, Philippines.

With a record-breaking attendance of over 300 investment fiduciaries, fund managers, policymakers, specialists, and financial educators, the PRIConference has been well-received by all delegates and speakers.

As APAFS is committed to bring corporate governance and investment education to the Asia Pacific Region, the conference explored valuable insights on portfolios in public markets, responsible investing, ESG integration, risk and return considerations, social security preparations, and retirement income. One of the conference highlights was a session that brought together stewards from the region to share current issues facing their jurisdiction and ideas to address them.

According to Gerry Cruz,, APAFS chief operating officer, "The Pacific Region Investment Conference is a gathering that promises to be a pivotal moment for trustees and industry leaders from across the Asia Pacific region and around the world." With more investment topics focused on private credit, REITs, and equity markets, the conference has truly become an essential learning opportunity for fiduciaries around the world, demonstrating the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among fiduciary stewards.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BlackRock Sustainable Product Strategy iShares and Index head Sunita Subramoniam served as keynote speaker of the 21st PRIConference.

"By staying true to our founding principles and working collaboratively with other organizations, we are confident that we can continue to make a meaningful impact on the fiduciary community in the region through valuable education and stronger connections," said Daniel Roland, executive director of the Asia Pacific Association for Fiduciary Studies.

Prior to the 21st Annual Pacific Region Investment Conference, the Fiduciary Events Week of APAFS commenced with a three-day training series for fiduciaries and trustees, featuring two returning sessions—the Global Fiduciary Strategist Training by 3Ethos and the Accredited Investment Fiduciary by fi360. Aside from these offerings, APAFS introduced three new trainings—the Investment Governance Essentials Training, Investment Fiduciary Masterclass both by fi360, and the Global Fiduciary Strategist Masterclass by 3Ethos.

For more information about APAFS, visit their website at www.apafs.org. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Prior to the 21st Annual Pacific Region Investment Conference, the Fiduciary Events Week of APAFS commenced with a three-day training series for fiduciaries and trustees.

# San Nicolas proposes waiving driver's license fees for active duty service members' spouses

Spouses of active duty service members will not have to worry about paying fees for a Guam driver's license should a bill, authored by Democrat Senator Dwyane T.D. San Nicolas, become local law.

San Nicolas introduced Bill 224-37 on Dec. 20, 2023, which will waive motor vehicle driver's license fees for spouses of active duty service members, if passed into Guam law.

San Nicolas

"This bill will bring Guam into compliance with Federal law, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act," said San Nicolas, the chairman of the Legislative Committee on Emergency Response, Military and Veteran Affairs, Border Safety, and Mayors Council of Guam. "Active duty service member spouses should have been exempted from fees when obtaining a motor vehicle driver's license on the island a long time ago and that's what this measure will authorize."

This act shall be effective immediately upon enactment. ***(PR)***

# NMC offices closed today

Northern Marianas College employees will be engaged in professional development activities today, Jan. 5, 2024. Therefore, all NMC offices will be closed during this period and are scheduled to reopen on Monday, Jan. 8, 2024.

Individuals who are seeking assistance in applying for NMC's Spring 2024 semester can email oar@marianas.edu or visit www.marianas.edu/spring2024 for more information. ***(NMC)***

# Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 4

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

**Mark Rabago** EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

## Humans over machines: *The New York Times* seeks to protect journalism in suing OpenAI and Microsoft

*The New York Times* is not content to let OpenAI and Microsoft get rich using the newspaper's web content for artificial intelligence like ChatGPT without paying and sued last week in Manhattan federal court.

We don't know if the pun on the word "content" is particularly funny or if an AI robot would be inclined to such wordplay, but we do know it was written by humans, us, the people behind the words and pictures of the *Daily News.*

And having people, not machines, tell the human stories of the city and the world for other humans to read should stay that way.

We could have asked ChatGPT to write an editorial about how it is bad that ChatGPT lifted wholesale without paying from a newspaper to teach itself how to replace newspapers. However, while AI doesn't get tired of gimmicks, real people do.

*The Times* alleges in its lawsuit that ChatGPT was fed huge numbers of articles produced by the paper's website to allow the program to learn using the "large language model." As the complaint states, "an LLM works by predicting words that are likely to follow a given string of text based on the potentially billions of examples used to train it."

For teaching material, "the training set was comprised of 45 terabytes of data—the equivalent of a Microsoft Word document that is over 3.7 billion pages long." Not all of that was from the Times, but the work of that newspaper and website, like the works of this newspaper and website, are copyrighted and can't just be lifted.

When OpenAI began it was a nonprofit, sharing with all its creations for the betterment of humankind. But the humans in charge didn't need AI to learn about the profit motive and they changed to a proprietary system to sell. No more sharing from them and customers have to pay. But they get to borrow and not pay?

They could have used non-copyrighted works for their classroom, like the collected plays, poems and sonnets of Shakespeare. That would be perfectly legal, but ChatGPT would then write and speak like an Englishman of 400 years ago.

Or they could have borrowed without any limits from Mark Twain, who during his lifetime fought furiously for laws for copyright protections. But Twain died in 1910 and all his creations are now free to use for everyone. Under U.S. law, current copyright protection lasts for the life of the author plus 70 more years.

Other works have a 95-year shield, like Walt Disney's 1928 "Steamboat Willie," the first appearance of Mickey Mouse, which entered the public domain on Jan. 1. Sound recordings are protected for 100 years.

Craigslist, Google, and Facebook vacuumed up revenue from the press, devouring classifieds, display ads and circulation. Now

*See HUMANS on Page 11*

## Year-end grade for the 118th Congress: barely passing

**By JONATHAN BERNSTEIN**
Bloomberg Opinion

*Jonathan Bernstein is a* Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering politics. A former professor of political science at the University of Texas at San Antonio, he wrote* A Plain Blog About Politics.

Let's start with the good news about the first session of the 118th Congress. Lawmakers successfully avoided—or postponed—any major self-inflicted disasters. The debt limit was extended on time, averting a potential default. Temporary spending bills were passed before the deadline, twice, pushing any possible federal government shutdown until January. And several other key programs, such as those contained in the farm bill, similarly were extended.

It's a bit of a myth that no significant legislation passes during election years and even more of a myth that important laws can't be passed with a divided government. But so far, this is shaping up to be a historically inactive Congress—just barely doing the minimum. Fewer than 30 bills will be enacted into law this year, by far the fewest since at least 1973. Even that's probably an understatement, given the minimal effect of what did pass compared to what happens during a typical session.

This is one time where it's easy to see who's at fault. That would be House Republicans, the party and chamber that took a week to elect a speaker last January and then spent three weeks in October dumping him and choosing another. Senate Republicans, the majority of Senate Democrats, and (to the extent they could) House Democrats were all willing to bargain in good faith on many items and achieve compromises.

House Republicans basically had two poses. They were either attempting to pass show bills that the most extreme party members could endorse and coerce the rest of their conference to support, or they allowed the Senate versions of must-pass items to get through, usually with more Democratic votes than Republican. They also set a modern record for bills they tried to pass on the floor that were defeated in final votes, yanked at the last minute because they didn't have the votes, or failed to win procedural votes. The latter used to be something that happened every few years, but it became common in Kevin McCarthy's House.

And while it's true that Congress managed to avert major disaster this session, plenty of important things fell through the cracks. For example, aid to Ukraine, Israel, other allies and border programs hasn't been approved. Lawmakers also failed to meet the deadline to re-authorize PEPFAR, leaving the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa in limbo. And while passing temporary funding measures has prevented a government shutdown, keeping spending on autopilot makes it impossible to adjust for changing circumstances—or, for that matter, the priorities of the new House Republican majority. In each of these cases, the inability of House Republicans to agree internally or to bargain with other actors within the system has not only harmed the nation, but also prevented them from having policy wins.

This isn't to say that Senate Republicans or Democrats in either chamber are perfect. After bipartisan cooperation on spending bills in committee, most of those measures stalled on the Senate floor; aid to Israel and Ukraine is stalled while members try to cut a deal on border policies. There's room for argument about which party is most at fault for those impasses, but at least there have been serious good faith negotiations between the parties in the Senate. House Republicans haven't even tried.

On the Senate side, the confirmation process is still broken, highlighted by Alabama Republican Tommy Tuberville's long and unsuccessful effort to change Pentagon abortion policy by blocking routine promotions. That's the one that got attention, but Republicans continue to slow-walk every executive branch and judicial nomination, including those they actually support. Republicans deserve the bulk of the blame there, but Senate Democrats have also failed to respond in any kind of aggressive way.

Congressional oversight has taken a back seat for years and didn't improve this year. The House mainly focused on repeating wild and false accusations generated by Republican-aligned media. The Senate wasn't much better. The chamber put some pressure on the Supreme Court following the ethics scandal involving justices, but not much. And executive branch oversight was limited, although a few hearings were held, such as a session on air traffic safety, following media attention to the problem.

Prospects for anything better in 2024 seem unlikely. New House Speaker Mike Johnson has already drawn attacks from the House Freedom Caucus, demonstrating more than anything that they are the problem, not the ideology or skills of individual party leaders. It's still possible that House Republicans will insist on an extended government shutdown in January or February, and unlikely that Congress will pass this year's long-delayed spending bills. As far as other problems facing the nation being solved, don't count on it. We'll be lucky to get through 2024 without one of those self-inflicted disasters finally happening.

**EDITORIAL POLICY** Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

# Have scientific breakthroughs declined?

**By F.D. FLAM**
Bloomberg Opinion

*F.D. Flam is a* Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering science. She is host of the* Follow the Science podcast.

2023 had barely begun when scientists got some jolting news. On Jan. 4, a paper appeared in Nature claiming that disruptive scientific findings have been waning since 1945. An accompanying graph showed all fields on a steep downhill slide.

Scientists took this as an affront. The New York Times interpreted the study to mean that scientists aren't producing as many "real breakthroughs" or "intellectual leaps" or "pioneering discoveries." That seems paradoxical when each year brings a new crop of exciting findings. In the 12 months following that paper, scientists have listened to the close encounters between supermassive black holes, demonstrated the power of new weight loss drugs and brought to market life-changing gene therapies for sickle cell disease.

What the authors of the January paper measured was a changing pattern in the way papers were cited. They created an index of disruptiveness that measured how much a finding marked a break with the past. A more disruptive paper would be cited by many future papers while previous papers in the same area would be cited less—presumably because they were rendered obsolete. This pattern, they found, has been on a decades-long decline.

One of the authors, Russell Funk of the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota, said they wanted to measure how new findings shifted attention away from old ways of doing things. "Science definitely benefits from a cumulative work and studies that come along and refine our existing ideas. But it also benefits from being shaken up every now and then," he said.

We're seeing fewer shake-ups now. Funk said he thinks it's related to funding agents taking too few risks. But others say it may only reflect changes in the way scientists cite each other's work. Scientists I talked to said researchers cite papers for many reasons—including as way to ingratiate themselves with colleagues, mentors or advisers. Papers on techniques get a disproportionate number of citations, as do review articles because they're easier to cite than going back to the original discoveries.

Citations in papers are "noisy data" Funk admitted, but there's a lot of it—millions of papers—and such data can reveal interesting trends. He agreed, though, that people shouldn't conflate disruption with importance. He gave the example of the LIGO (the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory), which made a big splash in 2016 by detecting gravitational waves, long ago predicted by Einstein. By his definition it was not disruptive.

I was glad he brought up this project, which is operated by Caltech and MIT. Confirming Einstein was just the beginning – LIGO also opened up a new way of observing the universe, allowing scientists to detect collisions between invisible objects, like black holes and neutron stars. In some ways, I think it was too novel to be disruptive—it didn't displace earlier ways of doing something. There were no earlier ways of doing what it does.

Biologist Gregory Petsko of Harvard Medical School said a better way to think about important science would be to consider some findings transformative—opening new avenues without closing off the old—though he agreed that the funding agents could get more disruption by taking more chances on long-shots.

He listed three findings he considers transformative. The first was PCR (polymerase chain reaction), which allowed scientists to amplify DNA and vastly improved their ability to decipher the information coded there. The second was the reprogramming of adult skin cells so they could act like embryonic stem cells. The third was Crispr, the technique for precisely editing the genetic information in DNA. These may or may not have put anyone out of business (as a "disruptive" discovery might have done) but they opened up vast new possibilities in basic science as well as medicine.

The world does need more long-shot research, said George Church, professor of genetics at the Harvard-MIT Program in Health Sciences and Technology. "In fact, you should fail a million times a day, which is in contrast to the NASA motto, which is failure is not an option," he said.

He strongly disagrees with the notion that scientific progress is declining. He co-wrote a rebuttal to the disruption paper for STAT, in which he argued disruption as measured by the study doesn't reflect what we should really want from science, which is knowledge that can help us live longer, better, healthier lives.

Brian Uzzi, a professor at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, had another explanation for the changing pattern in scientific discovery. He said one thing that's changed steadily since 1945 is our cumulative knowledge. "Every year, more papers get published than the year before," he said. Now there are more than a million a year. That means, by necessity, students are trained more narrowly and are equipped to see smaller pieces of big problems.

"That leads me to believe that it's not that science is becoming less disruptive, it is that science addresses problems in a brand-new way," he said. Revolutions are less likely to come down to individual papers; today they just happen on a more gradual scale as different researchers take on different pieces in a divide-and-conquer fashion.

With the complexity of many of today's particle accelerators and space telescopes it's tempting to consider that most of the easy problems have been solved—an argument that's mocked whenever it's made. But one person not afraid to talk about it is science writer John Horgan, author of the 1996 book The End of Science. In a post for his website, he clarifies his view:

There will be no more insights into nature as revolutionary as the theory of evolution, the double helix, quantum mechanics, relativity and the big bang. Why not? Because these profound discoveries are true. Put them together, and they form a map of reality that, like our maps of the Earth, is unlikely to undergo significant changes.

Horgan said since he wrote the book, he's changed his mind about some things—he thinks there might be room for a conceptual revolution in quantum mechanics.

But even if it's true that the foundations of biology and physics are never going to be toppled, there's plenty of science yet to be done that most of us would consider profound—especially in the applied sciences. From curing disease to reducing global warming, there's no shortage of hard scientific problems crying out for solutions.

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

# Flores' open letter seeks public support for bill

Dear people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands,

I am writing to you today to address the importance of House Bill 23-22, which aims to codify investigative subpoena powers to the Office of the Attorney General. The attorney general is the highest legal office in our Commonwealth and has the responsibility to investigate and prosecute all crimes.

Unfortunately, our law does not currently expressly set out the authority for the attorney general to issue subpoenas for investigations. Instead, the attorney general must rely on the Office of Public Auditor and the cooperation of government agencies and local businesses to provide information relevant to an investigation. This is a time-consuming process and often hinders the attorney general's ability to act swiftly in cases of public abuse or corruption.

The investigative subpoena power is essential for the attorney general to carry out the criminal investigative duties effectively. First, the attorney general could then gather crucial evidence and information during investigations. Second, the attorney general can uncover the truth by compelling reluctant witnesses or entities to cooperate, thereby ensuring accountability and transparency. Third, investigative subpoena power contributes to maintaining the integrity of the legal system by providing the necessary tools to fulfill the role of the chief law enforcement officer.

By addressing systemic problems, we can improve the overall functioning of our legal system, ensuring that justice is served promptly and effectively. By providing the attorney general with investigative subpoena powers, we align with the principles of equal protection under the law and the pursuit of justice, working toward a legal system that upholds these fundamental principles.

By the passing of House Bill 23-22, we can empower the attorney general to carry out its duties effectively and efficiently, leading to a more trustworthy and reliable legal system. The House has done its part in that process. Please contact your senator and encourage the final passage of this important piece of legislation. Senate President Edith Deleon Guerrero, we call upon you to be a leader and call up this bill for a vote!

**Marissa R. Flores**
*Member, House of Representatives (Precinct 3)*
*23rd CNMI Legislature*

## HUMANS

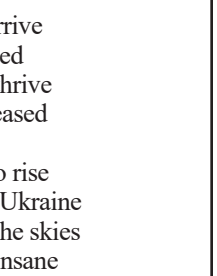
*From page 10*

another internet invention, AI, is threatening the press itself. As the lawsuit says, "if the Times and other news organizations cannot produce and protect their independent journalism, there will be a vacuum that no computer or artificial intelligence can fill." And yes, we meant to play on the word "vacuum."

©2023 New York Daily News

# 2023 Now Old, 2024 Hope on Hold

**LITERARY NOOK**



**By JOEY CONNOLLY**
Special to the Saipan Tribune

*Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.*

### A Man's True Worth

*"A man's true worth, I maintain, can only be guessed at, for he holds most dear loyalty and good faith and abhors all falsehood, which is the world's undoing. Therefore, one trusts such a man who is as good as his word."*
—song lyrics by Johannes de Meruco, 14th century French composer

### BS LIVE with POTUS 45

*(Trump muses about his prevarications)*

Let not a single ounce of truth be known
dismiss my indictments; truth is not truth
draft deferment from spurs in my foot bone
devoid of basic honesty since early youth

Progress is quick, lying comes fast and slick
yes it has always been a cinch for me to do
I had many different lies from which to pick
disbelief varied but I always followed through

Lying mastery was part of my reality TV show
luck held out with very few performers leaks
my political promised lies continued to grow
with new conspiracy theories every few weeks

If you can believe all my lies you got it right
the truth be damned—morning noon and night.

### G.U.N.: Gaza Ukraine Numbers

From tragic wars to hope for another ceasefire
from Ukraine cities and fields casualties unfold
thousands of dead, refugees in muck and mire
Gaza disease lack of water and food tales told

Hope as more supply trucks begin to arrive
hope as more hostages are being released
1.5 million female refugees in Poland thrive
hope for a proper burial for all the deceased

As death counts on all sides continue to rise
more than 20,000 in Gaza, far more in Ukraine
death and destruction rain down from the skies
thousands of innocent dead! it is truly insane

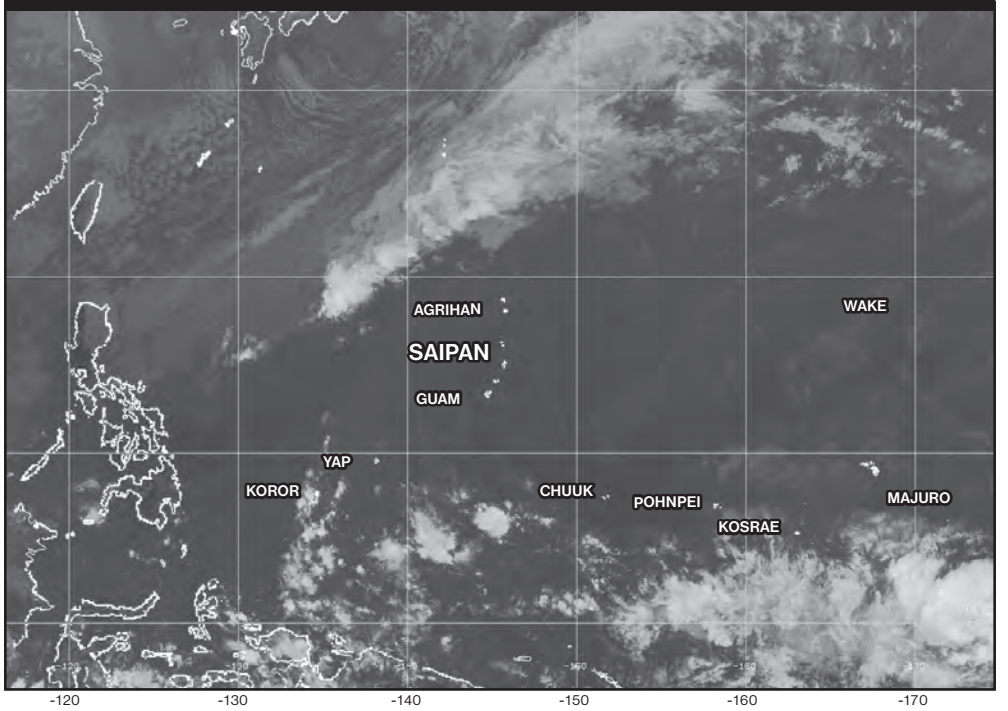
Tragedy of these two wars seen around the world
as numbers of innocent deaths are daily revealed.

# The Weather

## 5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

| TODAY | SATURDAY | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph. | Mostly sunny with a 10 percent chance of showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph. | Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers. | Breezy during the day. Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers. | Breezy during the day. Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers. |
| 86 77° | 86 77° | 86 77° | 86 77° | 86 77° |

## YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE




**PICTURE TIME: 7:29 AM THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2024**

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery shows isolated light showers through out the Marianas. Pleasant weather is expected. Combined seas of 4 to 6 feet has been observered through out the Marianas.

*Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/*

| MICRONESIA | | ▲ ▼ °F |
|---|---|---|
| Guam and Rota | Partly Cloudy | 84° / 76° |
| Palau | Cloudy | 84° / 77° |
| Yap | Partly Cloudy | 85° / 79° |
| Chuuk | Partly Cloudy | 84° / 79° |
| Pohnpei | Thunderstorms | 85° / 78° |
| Kosrae | Partly Cloudy | 85° / 78° |
| Majuro | Partly Cloudy | 86° / 81° |

| DAY | SUNRISE | SUNSET |
|---|---|---|
| Today | 6:43 AM | 5:59 PM |
| Saturday | 6:43 AM | 6:00 PM |
| Sunday | 6:44 AM | 6:00 PM |
| Monday | 6:45 AM | 6:01 PM |
| Tuesday | 6:45 AM | 6:02 PM |

| DAY | MOONRISE | MOONSET | MOONRISE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Today | 12:40 AM | 12:40 PM | - |
| Saturday | 1:28 AM | 1:17 PM | - |
| Sunday | 2:20 AM | 1:58 PM | - |
| Monday | 3:15 AM | 2:45 PM | - |
| Tuesday | 4:15 AM | 3:38 PM | - |

| AROUND THE GLOBE | | ▲ ▼ °F |
|---|---|---|
| Auckland | Mostly Cloudy | 77° / 62° |
| Beijing | Fair | 41° / 17° |
| Hong Kong | Fair | 70° / 54° |
| Honolulu | Partly Cloudy | 80° / 71° |
| London | Shower | 52° / 39° |
| Los Angeles | Partly Cloudy | 73° / 50° |
| Manila | Partly Cloudy | 88° / 75° |
| Melbourne | Windy | 82° / 57° |
| Miami | Partly Cloudy | 81° / 75° |
| New York | Rainy | 53° / 47° |
| Osaka | Mostly Cloudy | 54° / 41° |
| Paris | Mostly Cloudy | 55° / 48° |
| Busan | Sunny | 52° / 34° |
| Rome | Partly Cloudy | 57° / 41° |
| Salem | Rainy | 68° / 52° |
| San Francisco | Partly Cloudy | 57° / 48° |
| Seoul | Cloudy | 39° / 21° |
| Tokyo | Sunny | 58° / 46° |
| Washington, DC | Cloudy | 48° / 35° |

| TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY | | FEET |
|---|---|---|
| 2:14 AM | High Tide | 1.04 |
| 7:31 AM | Low Tide | 0.68 |
| 2:03 PM | High Tide | 1.58 |
| 9:32 PM | Low Tide | 0.26 |

**NEWS DESK** For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE** For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

**SUBSCRIPTION** Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

**ADVERTISING** For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

## FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

### DEPARTURES

**SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA076 | 9:50AM | 10:35AM | Daily |

**SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA824 | 7:05AM | 9:45AM | 1, 3, 5 |

**GUAM-MANILA (MNL)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PR 111 | 5:55AM | 7:55AM | Daily |
| UA193 | 7:50PM | 11:50PM | 2, 5 via Palau |
| UA183 | 7:55PM | 9:50PM | Daily |

**SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| OZ626/703 | 3:10AM | 10:30PM | 4, 7 via ICN |
| 7C3403/2305 | 4:40AM | 10:20PM | Daily |
| UA076/183 | 9:50AM | 9:50PM | Daily via Guam |
| UA076/193 | 9:50AM | 11:50PM | 2, 5 via Guam, Palau |

**SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TW308 | 2:15AM | 6:10AM | Daily |
| OZ626 | 3:10AM | 6:55AM | 4,7 |
| 7C3403 | 4:40AM | 8:35AM | Daily |
| 7C3405 | 4:35PM | 8:25PM | Daily |

### ARRIVALS

**GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA174 | 8:00AM | 8:45AM | Daily |

**NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA825 | 9:25PM | 2:00AM+1 | 2, 4, 7 |

**MANILA (MNL)-GUAM**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA189 | 00:40AM | 6:30AM | 3, 6 |
| PR110 | 10:05PM | 3:55AM+1 | Daily |
| UA192 | 10:40PM | 6:30AM+1 | 2, 5 via Palau |
| UA184 | 10:55PM | 4:45AM+1 | 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 |

**MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA189/174 | 00:40AM | 8:45AM+1 | 3, 6 via Guam |
| OZ702/625 | 12:05PM | 1:40AM+1 | 3, 6 via ICN |
| UA192/174 | 10:40PM | 8:45AM+1 | 2, 5 via Palau, Guam |
| UA184/174 | 10:55PM | 8:45AM+1 | 1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam |
| 7C2306/3406 | 11:15PM | 3:30PM+1 | Daily |

**INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7C3406 | 10:10AM | 3:30PM | Daily |
| TW307 | 7:45PM | 1:15AM+1 | Daily |
| 7C3404 | 10:15PM | 3:35AM+1 | Daily |
| OZ625 | 8:20PM | 1:40AM+1 | 3, 6 |

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

## STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

**SAIPAN TO ROTA**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1301 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 08:30 | 09:00 | Daily |
| 1302 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 10:30 | 11:00 | Daily |
| 1303 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 15:30 | 16:00 | Daily |

**ROTA TO SAIPAN**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3101 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 9:30 | 10:00 | Daily |
| 3102 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 11:30 | 12:00 | Saturday & Sunday |
| 3103 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 13:30 | 14:00 | Monday To Friday |
| 3104 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 16:30 | 17:00 | Daily |

**ROTA TO GUAM**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3401 | ROTA | GUAM | 11:30 | 12:00 | Monday To Friday |

**GUAM TO ROTA**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4301 | GUAM | ROTA | 12:30 | 13:00 | Monday To Friday |

**SAIPAN TO TINIAN**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1201 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 7:30 | 7:45 | Daily |
| 1202 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 8:00 | 8:15 | Daily |
| 1203 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 9:00 | 9:15 | Daily |
| 1204 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 10:00 | 10:15 | Daily |
| 1206 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 14:00 | 14:15 | Daily |
| 1207 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 15:00 | 15:15 | Daily |
| 1208 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 16:00 | 16:15 | Daily |
| 1209 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 17:00 | 17:15 | Daily |

**TINIAN TO SAIPAN**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2101 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 8:00 | 8:15 | Daily |
| 2102 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 8:30 | 8:45 | Daily |
| 2103 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 9:30 | 9:45 | Daily |
| 2104 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 10:30 | 10:45 | Daily |
| 2106 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 14:30 | 14:45 | Daily |
| 2107 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 15:30 | 15:45 | Daily |
| 2108 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 16:30 | 16:45 | Daily |
| 2109 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 17:30 | 17:45 | Daily |

# Business

# MVA, Chamber welcome NC Picks opening

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

MARK RABAGO

E-Land Group CEO Brian Shin, center, led the ribbon cutting of NC Picks at the KASE II Building in Garapan last Dec. 21.

MARK RABAGO

NC Picks—NC stands for New Core—is part of E-Land Retail, which has 44 stores in Korea and three stores in China.

The Marianas Visitors Authority and the Saipan Chamber of Commerce both welcomed E-Land Group's opening of NC Picks Saipan in Garapan.

The warehouse-type discount store opened at the KASE II Building across T Galleria in Garapan last Dec. 22.

MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion said NC Picks will bring additional value to Saipan's tourism district.

"We're very excited with this new development right in the high-traffic area of the Garapan Core. Anytime new businesses are opening in this area, it bodes well for the economy and it bodes well for the future of the tourism industry. It also adds to the list of companies that are located here and attractions and things for the visitors to see and do."

The former deputy director of the Office of Planning and Development also said the NC Picks opening is in lockstep with the Garapan Revitalization Project.

"The timing couldn't be better. The project is ongoing. They just paved Paseo de Marianas a few days ago and the project will ultimately reach right in front of DFS (T Galleria) along Beach Road up to the intersection down south."

Concepcion said NC Picks Saipan being the first NC Picks branch outside of Asia addresses one of the longtime concerns of tourists in the CNMI.

"When we conducted exit surveys a little while ago, pre-COVID-19 and even today, a lot of the feedback that we got from visitors was that there is a lack of shopping opportunities for visitors who come here. So, I see NC Picks opening up right here in the middle of the tourist district as really important in filling that need. We're excited and we congratulate the E-Land Group for their opening of NC Picks, which has 47 branches throughout Korea and China," he said.

Chamber president Joe C. Guerrero, meanwhile, said NC Picks is definitely a great addition to the Garapan Core.

"Having this shop, in addition to OHAS Boulangerie & Café that has just opened recently, is great for our community and great for tourism as well. This is about our future here and that things will get better. It means we're deeply rooted here and the opening of a place like this isn't a short-term commitment. This is a long-term commitment. We'd like to see E-Land do more long-term commitments and investments and they did say they are going to so let's see what else is in store from them."

Guerrero added that NC Picks, along with the OHAS Boulangerie & Café opening last September, in a way, will spearhead the complete reinvention of the Garapan Core.

"If you have a nice store like this with its brands and something that works in Korea over here, I think what it does is it elevates everybody. All the other stores that are here would want to renovate and better their services and products. It's healthy competition. So, I challenge other storeowners out here to relook, rebrand, and level up as best they can. I know it's difficult during these trying times, but it's all about investing in the future," he said.

E-Land CEO Brian Shin led a ribbon-cutting of NC Picks last Dec. 21 during the store's grand opening that was attended by VIPs.

"As a member of our community, you know, we've made a commitment to make Garapan more successful and give the tourists something they actually enjoy. So, this is another product that we're introducing to the market today. Our mother company, E-Land, started off in Korea as a clothing company, a very small clothing shop, and now we own multiple shopping centers in Korea. This is not something that we're trying new today. This is something we do well and we hope we're creating some advantage to our destination. So again, thanks for your support. We couldn't have done this without everyone's support and things will get better from here. That's our hope."

E-Land Marianas vice president Gloria Cavanagh said before the announcement of NC Picks opening, many asked her about the flurry of business openings by E-Land.

"They said, 'Do you see something that we don't see?' What we see is we see hope. With the support of the private and public sectors and our leaders in the community, we firmly believe there is still hope for us and we want to make sure we're part of that revitalization, especially in the Garapan Core. This is why we're doing what we're doing and hopefully things can get better. I want to leave you basically with why we're opening this and that's an admission of healing. Our mission is with a reasonable price and best quality, we're creating the world that everyone can enjoy. We're just happy to try to bring a little bit of that to Saipan," she said.

NC Picks—NC stands for New Core—is part of E-Land Retail, which has 44 stores in Korea and three stores in China. It generates a total revenue of over $1.5 billion, making it a large-scale retail specialized company.

NC Picks Saipan primarily focuses on sports and casual clothing, handling over 30 brands raging from bags, shoes, to suitcases. Just some of the items available at great discounts at NC Picks Saipan are sports brands including Nike, Under Armour, Adidas, Crocs, casual brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Lacoste, Champion, and Brooks Brothers, and European brands such as Maison Kitsune, Comme des Garcons, and Ami.

MARK RABAGO

Just some of the items available at great discounts at NC Picks Saipan are sports brands including Nike, Under Armour, Adidas, Crocs, casual brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Lacoste, Champion, and Brooks Brothers, and European brands such as Maison Kitsune, Comme des Garcons, and Ami.

## Fed officials saw inflation cooling but were cautious about timing of rate cuts

**WASHINGTON** (AP)—The Federal Reserve's policymakers concluded last month that inflationary pressures were easing and that the job market was cooling. In response, the officials chose to leave their key interest rate unchanged for the third straight time and signaled that they expected to cut rates three times in 2024.

According to the minutes of their Dec. 12-13 meeting released Wednesday, Fed officials indicated in their own interest-rate forecasts that a lower benchmark rate "would be appropriate by the end of 2024" given "clear progress" toward taming inflation.

But they "stressed the importance" of remaining vigilant and keeping rates high "until inflation was clearly moving down sustainably" toward their 2% target. And though Chair Jerome Powell indicated at a news conference after the meeting that the Fed was likely done raising rates, the minutes show that Fed officials felt the economic outlook was uncertain enough that that further hikes were still "possible."

Powell had also suggested at his news conference that the Fed's policymakers discussed rate cuts during their meeting, a remark that helped ignite a stock market rally. Over the next few days, though, some other Fed officials tried to steer investors away from expecting any imminent cuts. Wednesday's minutes provided no explicit mention about a discussion of rate cuts.

Still, Paul Ashworth, chief North America economist at Capital Economics said "there is nothing in these minutes to dissuade us that the Fed will start to cut interest rates from this March onwards."

In the minutes of their meeting, the policymakers sounded optimistic about the outlook for inflation. They mentioned the end of supply chain backlogs that had caused shortages and higher prices, a drop in rents that is beginning to move through the economy and an increase in job seekers, which makes it easier for companies to fill vacancies without having to raise pay aggressively.

The central bank began raising rates in March 2022 to combat an unexpected resurgence in consumer prices that had begun nearly a year earlier. The Fed has since raised its benchmark rate 11 times to a 22-year high of about 5.4%.

The anti-inflation campaign has made steady progress, allowing the Fed to leave its benchmark rate unchanged since July. Consumer prices were up 3.1% in November from a year earlier—down from a four-decade high 9.1% in June 2022.

Higher rates were widely expected to trigger a recession in the United States, the world's largest economy. But the economy and the job market have proved unexpectedly resilient.

The U.S. gross domestic product—the economy's total output of goods and services—grew at a robust 4.9% annual rate from July through September on strong consumer spending and business investment. At their meeting last month, some Fed officials noted that toward the end of 2023, the economy appeared to have slowed.

# Nation

## Biden's kicking off 2024 by delving into some of country's darkest moments

**WASHINGTON** (AP)—President Joe Biden is starting the campaign year by evoking the Revolutionary War to mark the third anniversary of the deadly insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and visiting the South Carolina church where a white gunman massacred Black parishioners—seeking to present in the starkest possible terms an election he argues could determine the fate of American democracy.

On Friday, Biden will travel to near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, where George Washington and the Continental Army spent a bleak winter nearly 250 years ago. There, he'll decry former President Donald Trump for the riot by a mob of his supporters who overran the Capitol in an attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Three days later, the president will visit Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, where nine people were shot and killed in a June 2015 white supremacist attack.

AP

President Joe Biden speaks at the Wisconsin Black Chamber of Commerce, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, in Milwaukee.

Biden's kicking off 2024 by delving into some of the country's darkest moments rather than an upbeat affirmation of his record is meant to clarify for voters what his team sees as the stakes of November's election. During both events, he will characterize his predecessor as a serious threat to the nation's founding principles, arguing that Trump—who has built a commanding early lead in the Republican presidential primary—will seek to undermine U.S. democracy should he win a second term.

"We are running a campaign like the fate of our democracy depends on it, because it does," Biden reelection campaign manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez said on a conference call with reporters.

Trump, who faces 91 criminal charges stemming from his efforts to overturn his loss to Biden and three other felony cases, argues that Biden and top Democrats are themselves seeking to undermine democracy by using the legal system to thwart the campaign of his chief rival.

"Joe Biden and his allies are a real and compelling threat to our Democracy," Trump campaign senior advisers Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles wrote in a memo this week. "In fact, in a way never seen before in our history, they are waging a war against it."

Biden's channeling of personal grief and national traumas, often into calls for action, has become his political calling card. Tragedies have defined the president's own life, from the 1972 car crash that killed his first wife and infant daughter to his son Beau's death from brain cancer at age 46 in 2015.

In 2020, Biden won the White House by promising to heal the "soul of the nation" after he said that seeing hate groups marching in Charlottesville, Virginia, with torches and swastikas in 2017 propelled him to run.

Rather than promising to bridge the nation's partisan divide as he did four years ago, Biden will instead stress how Trump and top supporters of his "Make America Great Again" movement pose existential threats.

The president's reelection campaign has publicized Trump's repeating rhetoric used by Adolf Hitler when he suggested that immigrants entering the U.S. illegally are "poisoning the blood of our country," as well as the former president joking that he'd only seek to serve as a dictator on the first day of his second term.

"The leading candidate of a major party in the United States is running for president so that he can systematically dismantle and destroy our democracy," said Biden campaign communications director Michael Tyler.

Even if another Republican beats Trump in the GOP primary, Biden's reelection team argues the victor would be similar enough to the former president that the campaign's themes would change little.

"Anybody who wins the MAGA Republican nomination is going to have done so by hard-tacking to the most extreme positions that we have seen in recent American history," Tyler said.

The Jan. 5 address at Montgomery County Community College was initially scheduled to be delivered a day later, on the three-year anniversary of the Capitol attack, but was moved due to inclement weather forecast for the area.

A majority of Americans are concerned about the future of democracy in the upcoming election—though they differ along party lines on whom poses the threat.

## More hospitals are requiring masks as flu and COVID-19 cases surge

**NEW YORK** (AP)—More U.S. hospitals are requiring masks and limiting visitors as health officials face an expected but still nasty post-holiday spike in flu, COVID-19 and other illnesses.

While many experts say this season likely won't prove to be as deadly as some other recent winters, it still could mean hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations and many thousands of deaths across the country.

New York City last week instituted a mask mandate for the city's 11 public hospitals. Similar measures were ordered last week at some hospitals in Los Angeles and Massachusetts. Some hospitals reinstated masking rules for employees months ago, in anticipation of a seasonal rush of sick people.

Flu and COVID-19 infections have been increasing for weeks, with high levels of flu-like illness reported in 31 states just before Christmas. Updated national numbers are to be released Friday, but health officials predict infections will grow in many states well into January.

"What we're seeing right now, in the first week of January, is really an acceleration — of flu cases, in particular," said Dr. Mandy Cohen, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There is some good news. Flu and COVID-19 cases may peak by the end of the month and then drop, Cohen said. Though the flu has been skyrocketing, this year's cases are being caused by a strain that usually doesn't cause as many deaths and hospitalizations as some other versions. What's more, signs suggest current flu vaccines are well-matched to the strain.

"I don't think it's going to be overwhelming," said Dr. William Schaffner, Vanderbilt University infectious diseases expert. He deemed the current season "moderately severe."

The CDC is pointing the public to an agency website where people can look up their county, which can help them make decisions about whether to wear masks or take other precautions. Cohen urged people to get vaccinated and to seek treatment for flu and COVID-19.

Vaccinations are down this year, officials say. About 44% of U.S. adults had gotten flu shots by Dec. 23, according to the most recently available CDC vaccination survey data. Only about 19% of U.S. adults were reported to have received an updated COVID-19 shot as of early December.

COVID-19 cases are causing more severe disease than the flu but have been rising less dramatically. Health officials are keeping an eye on JN.1, a new version of the ever-evolving coronavirus. The omicron variant was first detected in the U.S. in September and just before Christmas accounted for an estimated 44% of COVID-19 cases.

The JN.1 variant may spread easier or be better at evading our immune systems, but there is no evidence that it causes more severe disease than other recent variants, health officials say. Current evidence indicates vaccines and antiviral medications work against it.

The CDC also has reported disappointing vaccination rates against another seasonal bug, respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV. That is a common cause of mild cold-like symptoms, but it can be dangerous for infants and older people. RSV cases rose in the fall but appear to have plateaued and are even going down in some places, according to the latest data.

## Bomb threats that led to brief lockdowns, evacuations of some state capitols a hoax

A bomb threat emailed to officials in several states early Wednesday briefly disrupted government affairs and prompted some state capitol evacuations, but no explosives were found and federal officials quickly dismissed the threats as a hoax.

The threats follow a spate of false reports of shootings at the homes of public officials in recent days.

Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi and Montana were among the states that evacuated statehouse offices or buildings.

The FBI said it was aware of numerous hoax bomb threats at state Capitol buildings, but had "no information to indicate a specific and credible threat." The bureau said it was working with state, local and federal law enforcement to gather, share and act on information.

"The FBI takes hoax threats very seriously because it puts innocent people at risk," it said in a statement.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear said on X that the Capitol was evacuated while state police investigated a threat received by the Secretary of State's Office. Lawmakers were elsewhere for ethics training, but Secretary of State spokeswoman Michon Lindstrom said some candidate filings were disrupted.

The "mass email" warned of multiple explosives that would go off in a few hours.

Public safety officials locked down the Mississippi Capitol on the second day of the legislative session and the state Senate delayed its morning meeting. The building was evacuated and bomb-sniffing dogs circled before an all-clear was given.

"This is an ongoing investigation and there is no further threat to the Capitol or surrounding buildings," said Bailey Martin, a spokesperson for the Mississippi Department of Public Safety.

The closures were brief and disruptions minimal in most states.

Montana's Capitol building reopened within two hours after a sweep of the building was completed and the threat was found not to be credible, said Megan Grotzke, spokesperson for the Department of Administration. ***(AP)***

# Asia

AFTER POWERFUL QUAKES LEAVE 78 DEAD

## Rescuers race against time in search for survivors in Japan

**SUZU, Japan** (AP)—Rescuers braved the cold in a race against time as they searched for survivors along Japan's western coastline Thursday after a powerful earthquake earlier in the week smashed homes and left at least 78 people dead and 51 missing.

A downpour and possible snow were expected, raising the risk of landslides. A list of those officially missing released overnight grew from 15 to 51 people in three cities, including a 13-year-old boy. Some earlier reported missing have been found but more names were coming in, officials said.

Ishikawa prefecture and nearby areas were shaken by more aftershocks, adding to the dozens that followed Monday's magnitude 7.6 temblor centered near Noto, about 300 kilometers (185 miles) from Tokyo on the opposite coast. The quake set off tsunami warnings, followed by waves measuring more than 1 meter (3 feet) in some places.

The first 72 hours are especially critical for rescues, experts say, because the prospects for survival greatly diminish after that.

"More than 40 hours have passed. This is a race against time, and I feel that we are at a critical moment," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Wednesday.

On Thursday, he announced that the number of troops dispatched for rescue operations is increasing from about 1,000 to 4,600.

AP

Firefighters look at the rubble and wreckage of a burned-out marketplace after a large fire caused by earthquakes in Wajima, Ishikawa prefecture, Japan Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024.

The narrowness of the Noto Peninsula has added to the challenges in reaching some communities. Water, power and cellphone service were still down in some areas.

Naomi Gonno said she and her children got out of their house just as it came crashing down.

But her children were screaming "Granma," and Gonno saw that her mother was trapped under the smashed house, with only her hand visible. She was able to squeeze her way out through a tiny space, Gonno said.

"I can't believe we're still alive," she said. "We are living in fear."

Relief officials handed out water, blankets, food and other supplies. Sniffer dogs joined military personnel and firefighters in the search.

Weather forecasters warned of heavy rain in Ishikawa, leading to worries about landslides and further damage to half-crumbled homes. Temperatures were expected to drop to around 2 degrees Celsius (36 degrees Fahrenheit) overnight.

Ishikawa officials raised the death toll on Thursday to 78. Of the dead, 44 people were in Wajima and 23 in Suzu, with the rest in five towns.

More than 330 people have been injured, at least 25 of them seriously.

Ishikawa Gov. Hiroshi Hase encouraged everyone to use masks, antiseptic and soap to guard against the spread of infectious diseases as evacuees shelter together. Ensuring adequate water supplies and toilets for those who were displaced is a priority, he said.

About 34,000 people are staying in evacuation centers, and some said they were hungry and cold, unable to sleep and afraid.

When Monday's quake hit, Yasuo Kobatake ran out of his house with just one sock on. The shaking threw him to the ground, and a concrete wall came crashing down, barely missing him, he said.

He was eating only rice balls and a few sips of water in paper cups at the elementary school where he and others have been sheltering. They slept on cushions, with no blankets.

"It was so cold. I thought I'd freeze to death," he said.

In the aftermath of the quakes and tsunami, boats lay overturned in the sea, roads were blocked by mounds of dirt, and pillars and walls lay scattered from flattened homes. A large fire turned an entire section of Wajima city into ashes.

Officials warned that more major quakes could follow.

## S. Korean police raid house of suspect who stabbed opposition leader in neck

**SEOUL, South Korea** (AP)—South Korean police on Wednesday raided the residence and office of a man who stabbed the country's opposition leader, Lee Jae-myung, in the neck in an attack that left him hospitalized in an intensive care unit, officials said.

The assault occurred when Lee, the leader of the liberal opposition Democratic Party, was passing through a throng of journalists after visiting the proposed site of a new airport in the southeastern city of Busan on Tuesday. The attacker, posing as a supporter, approached Lee asking for his autograph before he took out a 17-centimeter-long (6.7-inch) knife to attack him.

After receiving emergency treatment in Busan, Lee was transported by a helicopter to the Seoul National University Hospital for surgery. Cho Jeong-sik, the party's secretary general, said Wednesday the two-hour surgery was successful and that Lee remained in the hospital's intensive care unit for recovery. Local media reports said Lee was later transferred to an ordinary ward.

Kang Cheong Hee, a cardiothoracic surgeon who is a Democratic Party member, later told a briefing that Lee suffered "a serious injury"—a cut of more than 9 millimeters (0.35 inches) on his jugular vein. Kang, who didn't take part in Lee's surgery, cited the politician's surgery and medical records at the Seoul hospital. Repeated calls to hospital officials for comments were unanswered on Wednesday.

"Lee was initially in a very critical condition and it's no exaggeration to say he's survived by divine luck," Kang said.

The suspect was detained by police immediately after the attack. Police said he told investigators he attempted to kill Lee and that he had plotted his attack alone, but his motive is unknown.

Busan police said they sent officers to search the suspect's residence and office in the central city of Asan on Wednesday as part of their investigation. They said they also plan to examine the suspect's mobile phone.

Police said they plan to ask for a formal arrest warrant for the suspect over alleged attempted murder. Under local law, police can detain a suspect for 48 hours, but an arrest warrant allows them to keep a suspect in custody for 10 more days. Police often request an arrest warrant if they worry a suspect could flee or destroy evidence, according to police and court officials.

## ASIAN BRIEFS

### Taiwan reports China sent 4 suspected spy balloons over the island, some near key air force base

**TAIPEI, Taiwan** (AP)—Taiwan's Defense Ministry said that China sent four balloons over the island, three of which passed near to a key air force base. The reported incursions on Tuesday come as China has been upping its threat to use force to annex the self-governing republic. Taiwan is holding elections for its president and legislature on Jan. 13, and China has used its military, diplomatic and economic power to influence voters to back candidates favoring unification between the sides. Despite that, the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party is leading in most polls, reaffirming the electorate's backing for the status of de-facto independence from mainland China. China regularly sends navy ships and warplanes to waters and airspace close to Taiwan, and its use of balloons to collect intelligence could be a new stage in its campaign of intimidation against the island.

### Osprey 'black box' from fatal Japan crash that killed 8 recovered with data intact, Air Force says

**WASHINGTON** (AP)—The Air Force has recovered the flight data recorder from a CV-22B Osprey that crashed off the coast of Japan in late November with its data intact, which could provide valuable clues for investigators as to what caused the fatal accident. Eight Air Force Special Operations Command service members were killed in the Nov. 29 crash, which occurred off the coast of Yakushima Island in southwestern Japan. The Osprey was on a routine training flight enroute to Okinawa. Finding the voice and data recorder, or "black box," is a critical part of the accident investigation; some black boxes in previous Osprey accidents have not survived those crashes. The recorder is being sent to a lab for data retrieval and analysis of the data is expected to take several weeks, the Air Force said. In addition, the Navy salvage ship USNS Salvor was able to recover most of the Osprey's wreckage from the sea floor and transport it to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni for analysis. The Air Force was able to determine within days of the crash that a material failure—that something went wrong with the aircraft—and not a mistake by the crew—led to the deaths. The military's entire Osprey fleet has been grounded since Dec. 6. The government of Japan, the only international partner flying the Osprey, has also grounded its fleet.

### Former Pakistani PM Khan is indicted for allegedly insulting election officials

**ISLAMABAD** (AP)—A Pakistani court on Wednesday indicted imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan in a contempt case for allegedly insulting election officials, his defense lawyer said. The indictment is another blow for Khan, who is serving time on a corruption conviction and has multiple other legal cases hanging over him. It also comes days after election officials rejected Khan's nomination papers, blocking his attempt to contest parliamentary polls on Feb. 8. Khan is accused of calling the head of the Election Commission, Sikandar Sultan Rajaa, and other officials "personal servants" of former Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Sharif replaced Khan in April 2022 after he was ousted from power in a no-confidence vote in Parliament by his political opponents. Since then, government agencies have pursued him in the courts. The 71-year-old former cricketer is the country's most popular opposition figure. Khan's lawyer, Naeem Haider Panjutha, said Khan was indicted at Adiala Prison in Rawalpindi.

# World

## Israel's Mossad chief vows to hunt down Hamas members

**JERUSALEM** (AP)—The chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence service vowed Wednesday that the agency would hunt down every Hamas member involved in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, no matter where they are. His pledge came a day after the deputy head of the Palestinian militant group was killed in a suspected Israeli strike in Beirut.

Israel has refused to comment on reports it carried out the killing, but the remarks by David Barnea appeared to be the strongest indication yet it was behind the blast. He made a comparison to the aftermath of the slayings at the Munich Olympics in 1972, when Mossad agents tracked down and killed Palestinian militants involved in killing Israeli athletes.

Israel was on high alert Wednesday for an escalation with Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah militia after the strike in the Lebanese capital killed Saleh Arouri, the most senior Hamas member slain since the war in Gaza erupted nearly three months ago.

The strike in Hezbollah's southern Beirut stronghold could cause the low-intensity fighting along the Lebanon border to boil over into all-out war.

In a speech Wednesday evening, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah promised revenge, repeating his group's statement that "this dangerous crime" of Arouri's killing will not go "without response and without punishment." But he left the audience guessing as to when and in what form.

Nasrallah said Hezbollah had so far been careful in its strategic calculus in the conflict, balancing "the need to support Gaza and to take into account Lebanese national interests." But if the Israelis launch a war on Lebanon, the group is ready for a "fight without limits."

"They will regret it," he said. "It will be very, very, very costly."

Arouri's killing provided a morale boost for Israelis still reeling from the Oct. 7 attack as the militants continue to put up stiff resistance in Gaza and hold scores of hostages.

Barnea said the Mossad is "committed to settling accounts with the murderers who raided the Gaza envelope," referring to the area of southern Israel that Hamas attacked. He vowed to pursue everyone involved, "directly or indirectly," including "planners and envoys."

"It'll take time, as it took time after the Munich massacre, but we will put our hands on them wherever they are," he said. Barnea was speaking at the funeral of former Mossad head Zvi Zamir, who died at age 98 a day earlier.

Zamir headed the intelligence agency at the time of the Munich attack, in which Palestinian militants killed 11 members of the Israeli Olympic delegation. Israel subsequently killed members of the Black September militant group who carried out the attack.

Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been exchanging fire almost daily over the Israeli-Lebanese border since the war in Gaza began. But Nasrallah has appeared reluctant to escalate it further, perhaps fearing a repeat of the monthlong 2006 war, when Israel heavily bombed Beirut and southern Lebanon.

AP

Investigators stand on an apartment building where an apparent Israeli strike Tuesday killed top Hamas political leader Saleh Arouri, in the southern suburb of Beirut that is a Hezbollah stronghold, Lebanon, Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024.

At the same time, Hezbollah also faces pressure to show support for its ally Hamas.

Nasrallah's comments on balancing interests reflected the group's wariness of being blamed by Lebanese if its exchanges with Israel spiral into an all-out war that brings destruction similar to the 2006 war. He avoided specifics on any possible reprisal for Arouri's killing, though he said he would address the issue further in a speech Friday.

But he said if Israel attacks Lebanon, it would be in the national interest to fight back. "We are not afraid of war," he said. "If the enemy thinks about launching a war against Lebanon, then we will fight back without ceilings and without limits."

Hezbollah boasts an arsenal of tens of thousands of rockets and missiles as well as different types of drones. The United States has sought to prevent any widening of the conflict, including by deploying two aircraft carriers and other military assets to the region. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was expected in the region this week.

Nasrallah praised Arouri as well as the group's Oct. 7, attack, saying it "brought light back onto the Palestinian cause after it was nearly forgotten." He said Israel has so far failed in all its objectives in the Gaza war and was suffering damage to its international reputation.

## Iran says at least 95 were killed in blasts at ceremony honoring slain general

**DUBAI, United Arab Emirates** (AP)—Two bombs exploded and killed at least 95 people at a commemoration for a prominent Iranian general slain by the U.S. in a 2020 drone strike, Iranian officials said, as the Middle East remains on edge over Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for what appeared to be the deadliest militant attack to target Iran since its 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iran's leaders vowed to punish those responsible for the blasts, which wounded at least 211 people.

The explosions struck minutes apart on Wednesday, shaking the city of Kerman, about 820 kilometers (510 miles) southeast of the capital, Tehran. The second blast sprayed shrapnel into a screaming crowd fleeing the first explosion.

An earlier death toll of 103 was revised lower after officials realized that some names had been repeated on a list of victims, Iran's health minister, Bahram Einollahi, told state TV. Many of the wounded were in critical condition, however, so the death toll could rise.

The gathering marked the fourth anniversary of the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq. The explosions occurred near his grave site as long lines of people gathered for the event.

Iranian state television and officials described the attacks as bombings, without immediately giving clear details of what happened. The attacks came a day after a deputy head of the Palestinian militant group Hamas was killed in a suspected Israeli strike in Beirut.

The first bomb Wednesday was detonated around 3 p.m., and the other went off some 20 minutes later, the Iranian interior minister, Ahmad Vahidi, told state television. He said the second blast killed and wounded the most people.

Images and video shared on social media appeared to correspond with the accounts of officials, who said the first blast happened about 700 meters (765 yards) from Soleimani's grave in the Kerman Martyrs Cemetery near a parking lot. The crowd then rushed west along Shohada Street, where the second blast struck about 1 kilometer (0.62 miles) from the grave.

A delayed second explosion is often used by militants to inflict more casualties by targeting emergency personnel responding to an attack.

Iranian state TV and state-run IRNA news agency quoted emergency officials for the casualty figures. Authorities said Thursday would be a national day of mourning.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the attackers will face "a harsh response," though he didn't name any possible suspect. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi added: "Undoubtedly, the perpetrators and leaders of this cowardly act will soon be identified and punished."

Iran has multiple foes who could be behind the assault, including exile groups, militant organizations and state actors.

While Israel has carried out attacks in Iran over its nuclear program, it has conducted targeted assassinations, not mass casualty bombings. A U.S. State Department spokesman, Matthew Miller, said American officials had "no reason" to believe Israel was involved in Wednesday's attack in Iran. That was echoed by National Security Council spokesman John Kirby at the White House, who said "our hearts go out to all the innocent victims and their family members."

## Russia, Ukraine exchange hundreds of prisoners of war in biggest release so far

Russia and Ukraine on Wednesday exchanged hundreds of prisoners of war in the biggest single release of captives since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Ukrainian authorities said that 230 Ukrainian prisoners of war returned home in the first exchange in almost five months. Russia's Defense Ministry said that 248 Russian servicemen have been freed under the deal sponsored by the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE's Foreign Ministry attributed the successful swap to the "strong friendly relations between the UAE and both the Russian Federation and the Republic of Ukraine, which were supported by sustained calls at the highest levels."

The UAE has maintained close economic ties with Moscow despite Western sanctions and pressure on Russia after it launched its invasion in 2022.

Ukraine's human rights ombudsman, Dmytro Lubinets, said it was the 49th prisoner exchange during the war.

Some of the Ukrainians had been held since 2022. Among them were some of those who fought in milestone battles for Ukraine's Snake Island and the Ukrainian city of Mariupol.

Russian officials offered no other details of the exchange.

Also Wednesday, Russia said it shot down 12 missiles fired at one of its southern regions bordering Ukraine, as Kyiv's forces seek to embarrass the Kremlin and puncture President Vladimir Putin's argument that life is going on as normal despite the fighting.

The situation in the border city of Belgorod, which came under two rounds of shelling on Wednesday morning, "remains tense," said regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov, writing on Telegram.

"Air defense systems worked," he said, promising more details about possible damage after inspecting the area later in the day, part of a New Year's holiday week in Russia.

Ukraine fired two Tochka-U missiles and seven rockets at the region late Tuesday, followed by six Tochka-U missiles and six Vilkha rockets on Wednesday, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

The Soviet-built Tochka-U missile system has a range of up to 120 kilometers (75 miles) and a warhead that can carry cluster munitions. Ukraine has received some cluster munitions from the United States but the Tochka-U and Vilkha can use their own cluster munitions. ***(AP)***

# Off the Wall

## Woman with rare double uterus gives birth to two

**DORA, Ala.** (AP)—An Alabama woman with two uteri and two cervixes has given birth to two babies after carrying one of them in each uterus.

Kelsey Hatcher of Dora, about 28 miles (45.06 kilometers) northwest of Birmingham, gave birth to two girls on Wednesday and Thursday after a combined 20 hours of labor.

Hatcher was diagnosed with a double uterus, also called uterus didelphys, when she was 17. The rare congenital condition occurs in 0.3% of women, according to a report published by the University of Alabama at Birmingham. There is an "estimated one-in-a-million chance" of carrying a baby in both uteri, also known as a dicavitary pregnancy, the report says.

The older child, Roxi, was born on Tuesday, and Rebel arrived on Wednesday. Hatcher told WVTM-TV that both she and the newborns are healthy. Her husband, Caleb, was with her in the hospital, she said.

"That was our first moment of just us four together," Hatcher said. "And really getting to breathe that in and be in the moment and look at the girls together."

## LaGuardia passenger hid bullets in a baby diaper

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION VIA AP

This combination of photos provided by the Transportation Security Administration shows 17 bullets security officers found concealed inside a disposable baby diaper on Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, at LaGuardia Airport in New York.

**NEW YORK** (AP)—It was a loaded diaper, but not like you would think.

Security officers found 17 bullets concealed inside a disposable baby diaper Wednesday at New York's LaGuardia Airport, the Transportation Security Administration said.

Officers pulled the otherwise clean diaper from a passenger's carry-on bag after it triggered an alarm in an X-ray machine at an airport security checkpoint, the TSA said.

According to the agency, the passenger initially claimed he didn't know how the bullet-filled diaper ended up in his bag. Later he suggested his girlfriend put it there, the agency said.

The TSA identified the passenger as a man from Arkansas who was ticketed for a flight to Chicago's Midway Airport, but did not disclose his name. Port Authority police cited him for unlawful possession of the 9mm ammunition.

Messages seeking details were left with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which runs the airport, and the Queens district attorney's office.

The diaper disguiser is just the latest LaGuardia passenger to be flagged for packing bullets — and sometimes heat. It's a problem that has cropped up at airports across the U.S.

Last month, TSA officers found a .45-caliber pistol and a magazine loaded with six bullets concealed in a pair of Nike sneakers in a checked bag at LaGuardia. Firearms are allowed to be transported as checked luggage, but only in a locked, hard-sided container—not shoes.

In January 2021, officers at a security checkpoint intercepted 13 bullets hidden in a Mentos chewing gum container inside a carry-on bag. The bullets were mixed in with pieces of gum, the TSA said. The passenger, who was charged with unlawful possession of ammunition, claimed the bag belonged to his son, the agency said.

## OFFBEAT BRIEFS

### Police: Man attacked by lion while riding a motorcycle

**NAIROBI, Kenya** (AP)—Police in Kenya on Monday recovered the body of a man believed to have been attacked by a lion while he was riding a motorcycle near a national reserve in the south of the country. Police were notified by community members of an abandoned motorcycle along a road near the Marere forested area near the Shimba Hills National Reserve. Officers saw lion footprints that led from the motorcycle to a thicket where they found the remains of an unknown dead man, according to a police report. The lion population was declining in Kenya just over a decade ago, primarily due to human-wildlife conflict. The government listed lions as endangered, with an estimated population of 2,000 in 2010. A more recent survey put the number at 2,489.

### Idaho man arrested after flying stolen plane from North Las Vegas into California

**NORTH LAS VEGAS, Nev.** (AP) — An Idaho man was arrested after stealing a plane from a North Las Vegas hangar, flying it over 100 miles into a southern California airport and eventually running into a desert area after officers inquired about the aircraft. The man, who is currently in custody in San Bernardino County, faces charges of possession of a stolen airplane and taking stolen property across state lines from the incident, which occurred on Saturday, according to the county sheriff's department. There could be additional charges in Nevada, according to KSNV-TV. North Las Vegas officials said the man could also be behind attempted airplane burglaries in the three previous days before his arrest, according to the station. The aircraft was valued at about $80,000, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

# Science &Technology

## US military space plane's secret task to last years

By MARCIA DUNN
AP AEROSPACE WRITER

The U.S. military's X-37B space plane blasted off Thursday on another secretive mission that's expected to last at least a couple of years.

Like previous missions, the reusable plane resembling a mini space shuttle carried classified experiments. There's no one on board.

The space plane took off aboard SpaceX's Falcon Heavy rocket from NASA's Kennedy Space Center at night, more than two weeks late because of technical issues.

It marked the seventh flight of an X-37B, which has logged more than 10 years in orbit since its debut in 2010.

The last flight, the longest one yet, lasted 2 1/2 years before ending on a runway at Kennedy a year ago.

Space Force officials would not say how long this orbital test vehicle would remain aloft or what's on board other than a NASA experiment to gauge the effects of radiation on materials.

Built by Boeing, the X-37B resembles NASA's retired space shuttles. But they're just one-fourth the size at 29 feet (9 meters) long. No astronauts are needed; the X-37B has an autonomous landing system.

They take off vertically like rockets but land horizontally like planes, and are designed to orbit between 150 miles and 500 miles (240 kilometers and 800 kilometers) high. There are two X-37Bs based in a former shuttle hangar at Kennedy.

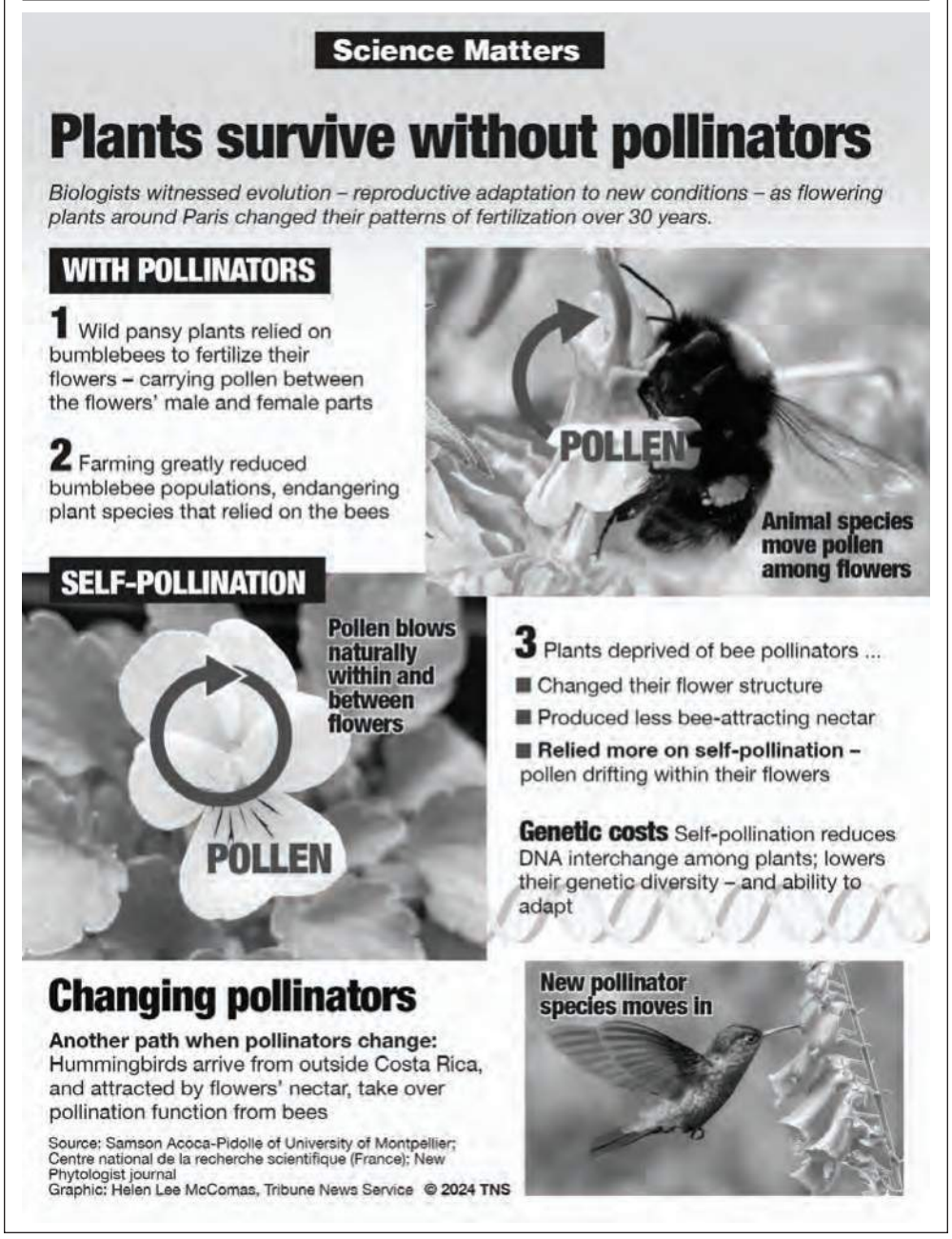
## Alzheimer's drugs might get into the brain faster with a new ultrasound tool—study

**WASHINGTON** (AP)—Scientists have found a way to help Alzheimer's drugs seep inside the brain faster—by temporarily breaching its protective shield.

The novel experiment was a first attempt in just three patients. But in spots in the brain where the new technology took aim, it enhanced removal of Alzheimer's trademark brain-clogging plaque, researchers reported Wednesday.

"Our goal is to give patients a head start," by boosting some new Alzheimer's treatments that take a long time to work, said Dr. Ali Rezai of West Virginia University's Rockefeller Neuroscience Institute, who led the study.

At issue is what's called the blood-brain barrier, a protective lining in blood vessels that prevents germs and other damaging substances from leaching into brain from the bloodstream. But it also can block drugs for Alzheimer's, tumors and other neurologic diseases, requiring higher doses for longer periods for enough to reach their target inside the brain.


Science Matters
Plants survive without pollinators
Biologists witnessed evolution – reproductive adaptation to new conditions – as flowering plants around Paris changed their patterns of fertilization over 30 years.
WITH POLLINATORS
1 Wild pansy plants relied on bumblebees to fertilize their flowers – carrying pollen between the flowers' male and female parts
2 Farming greatly reduced bumblebee populations, endangering plant species that relied on the bees
POLLEN
Animal species move pollen among flowers
SELF-POLLINATION
Pollen blows naturally within and between flowers
POLLEN
3 Plants deprived of bee pollinators ...
Changed their flower structure
Produced less bee-attracting nectar
Relied more on self-pollination – pollen drifting within their flowers
Genetic costs Self-pollination reduces DNA interchange among plants; lowers their genetic diversity – and ability to adapt
Changing pollinators
Another path when pollinators change: Hummingbirds arrive from outside Costa Rica, and attracted by flowers' nectar, take over pollination function from bees
New pollinator species moves in
Source: Samson Acoca-Pidolle of University of Montpellier; Centre national de la recherche scientifique (France); New Phytologist journal
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service © 2024 TNS

# Life & Style

## Unsealed records offer new detail on sex abuse allegations vs. Epstein

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Amid great hype, a new batch of previously secret court documents was unsealed late Wednesday related to Jeffrey Epstein, the jet-setting financier who killed himself in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges.

Social media has been rife in recent weeks with posts speculating the documents amounted to a list of rich and powerful men who were Epstein's "clients" or "co-conspirators."

There was no such list. The first 40 documents in the court-ordered release largely consisted of already public material revealed through nearly two decades of newspaper stories, TV documentaries, interviews, legal cases and books about the Epstein scandal.

Still, the records—including transcripts of interviews with some of Epstein's victims and old police reports—contained reminders that the millionaire surrounded himself with famous and powerful figures, including a few who have also been accused of misconduct.

There were mentions of Epstein's past friendship with Bill Clinton—who is not accused of any wrongdoing—and of Britain's Prince Andrew, who previously settled a lawsuit accusing him of having sex with a 17-year-old girl who traveled with Epstein.

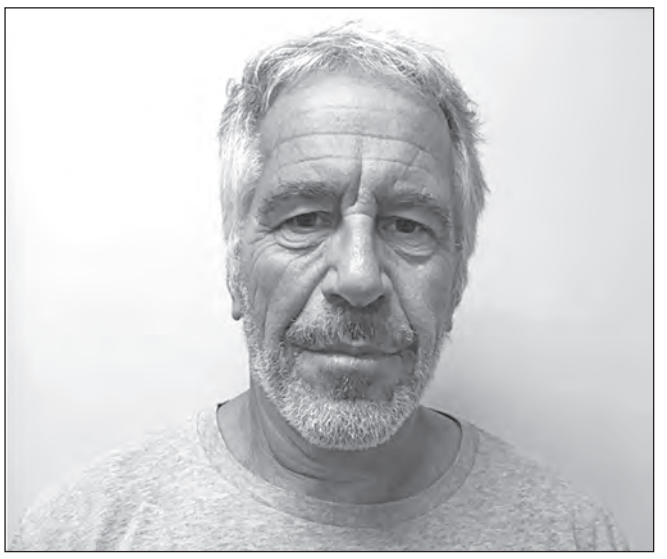
Epstein accuser Johanna Sjoberg testified in a newly released deposition that she once met Michael Jackson at Epstein's Palm Beach, Florida, home, but that nothing untoward happened with the late pop icon.

The documents being unsealed are related to a lawsuit filed in 2015 by one of Epstein's victims, Virginia Giuffre. She is one of dozens of women who sued Epstein for abusing them at his homes in Florida, New York, the U.S. Virgin Islands and New Mexico. This suit was against Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's former girlfriend who is now serving a 20-year prison term for helping recruit and abuse his victims.

Giuffre's lawsuit was settled in 2017, but the court had kept some documents blacked-out or sealed because of concerns about the privacy rights of Epstein's victims and others whose names had come up during the legal battle. More documents were to be released in coming days.

Among newly unsealed records were court memos in which Giuffre's lawyers complained that some women who had worked for Epstein were proving difficult to serve with subpoenas, as was Epstein himself. Two of those women had invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination when questioned in other lawsuits about whether they had helped procure young women for Epstein to abuse.

Maxwell, in her deposition, chaffed at being asked about Giuffre's allegations that she had arranged for her to have sexual encounters with Prince Andrew. She also reacted angrily to being asked about whether she had purchased



AP

This photo provided by the New York State Sex Offender Registry shows Jeffrey Epstein, March 28, 2017.

sex toys or revealing outfits, or seen young, topless women at Epstein's home.

One former member of Epstein's domestic staff said in a deposition that he felt uncomfortable with the number of young women showing up at the house, and felt threatened by Maxwell to stay quiet.

Other documents included legal arguments over whether Giuffre should be allowed more time to depose potential witnesses, including Clinton. Giuffre never alleged he was involved in illegal behavior, but her attorneys said the former president was a "key person who can provide information about his close relationship" with Maxwell and Epstein.

Maxwell's attorneys countered that Clinton testimony was not relevant.

The records included depositions of several Epstein victims, many of whom have told their stories publicly previously.

In her May 2016 deposition, Sjoberg described going to a dinner at one of Epstein's homes also attended by magician David Copperfield.

She said Copperfield did magic tricks before asking if she was aware "that girls were getting paid to find other girls." One of the key allegations against Epstein and Maxwell was that some of the girls he paid for sex acts then acted as recruiters to find him other victims. Sjoberg said Copperfield didn't get more specific about what he meant.

A publicist for Copperfield did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Sjoberg also shed new light on an April 2001 trip to New York in which she said Prince Andrew touched her breast while they posed for a photo at Epstein's Manhattan town house.

In the testimony, some of which appeared as excerpts in previous court filings, Sjoberg said she and Giuffre had flown with Epstein to New York on his private jet. Maxwell and Prince Andrew met them there.

At one point, she testified, Maxwell called her to an upstairs closet where they pulled out a puppet of Prince Andrew that had been made for a television program.

"It looked like him," Sjoberg said. "And she brought it down and presented it to him; and that was a great joke, because apparently it was a production from a show on BBC."

"And they decided to take a picture with it, in which Virginia and Andrew sat on a couch. They put the puppet on Virginia's lap, and I sat on Andrew's lap, and they put the puppet's hand on Virginia's breast, and Andrew put his hand on my breast, and they took a photo."

On the way to New York, Sjoberg testified, Epstein's jet diverted to Atlantic City, New Jersey, and spent a few hours at one of Donald Trump's casinos, because of bad weather.

Upon hearing the change of plans, Sjoberg recalled Epstein saying, "Great, we'll call up Trump and we'll go to" the casino. Sjoberg wasn't asked if they'd met up with Trump that night. Later in her testimony, she said she was never asked to give Trump a massage.

Sjoberg also testified that though she never met Clinton, Epstein once remarked to her that "Clinton likes them young," a remark she took as a reference to young women or girls.

Clinton has previously said through a spokesperson that while he traveled on Epstein's jet several times, he never visited his homes, had no knowledge of his crimes, and hadn't spoken to him since his conviction. Trump has also said that he once thought Epstein was a "terrific guy," but that they later had a falling out.

In her deposition, Giuffre said the summer she turned 17, she was lured away from a job as a spa attendant at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club to become a "masseuse" for Epstein—a job that involved performing sexual acts.

She settled a lawsuit against Prince Andrew in 2022 in which she claimed he had sexually abused her during a trip to London. That same year, Giuffre withdrew an accusation she had made against Epstein's former attorney, law professor Alan Dershowitz, saying she " may have made a mistake " in identifying him as an abuser.

The records released Wednesday included many references to Jean-Luc Brunel, a French modeling agent close to Epstein who was awaiting trial on charges that he raped underage girls when he killed himself in a Paris jail in 2022. Giuffre was among the women who had accused Brunel of sexual abuse.

Clinton's name also came up because Giuffre was questioned by Maxwell's lawyers about inaccuracies in newspaper reports about her time with Epstein, including a story quoting her as saying she had ridden in a helicopter with Clinton and flirted with Trump. Giuffre said neither of those things actually happened.

## Mother has second thoughts on decisions made for sons

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I moved near the ocean last year. I have two sons, 21 and 17. My older son moved across the country with some friends. The younger son, "Cody," chose at the last minute to stay with his dad.

Abby, it has been awful. Cody dropped out of high school and did not keep up with his home-school work. He quit his jobs, and he's on depression medication. This week, both boys moved where I am. My house is small, so I got them an apartment in my name. The landlord thinks I'm going to be living there.

My question is, how often should I go there and clean, make dinner and visit? I feel like I'll want to be there all the time -- before work, after work and on weekends. My husband thinks I should back off, but Cody is only 17 and going through a lot.

They moved into the apartment today, so this is still new. Also, is it crazy that I paid to put them in their own apartment? I felt like it was an OK choice since our house is so small. They both are planning to get jobs, and the younger one wants to start college classes. But they're lazy and messy, and I feel like I need to step in to help more. Any suggestions?

MOM OF BOYS IN CALIFORNIA

**DEAR MOM: Your older son is an adult. Your younger one is on the verge of becoming one. It's time for both to learn the skills they need to take care of themselves. Going there every day to cook, clean, do laundry and visit would be counterproductive to teaching them how to become independent.**

**If your older son has a job, he should contribute to the rent and groceries. Your younger son will never get into college if he doesn't do the homework he's ignoring. Having a small home doesn't mean he couldn't live with you until he establishes a healthy routine. Although it's tempting, please do not deprive them of this learning opportunity.**

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have a brother-in-law I have no contact with because he is jealous of my success and has made violent threats toward me. Every holiday and family function, when my mom asks me to attend, I ask if "Mr. Violent" is going to be there. Her answer is always, "I can't tell him he is not invited."

It always turns out that my wife and kids attend, and I go either to work or to a bar to watch sports because I don't want to be around this person whom I cannot stand. Any advice on how I should handle this? I am considering moving far away from my family.

LOATHING IN FLORIDA

**DEAR LOATHING: Your brother-in-law's jealousy is his problem; you have made it yours. That was a mistake. If an alcohol or drug problem has caused his threats of violence, your entire family should be urging him to get into treatment. If he has actually acted out, the police should have been called to discourage it from happening again.**

**Moving may be an expensive solution to your in-law problem. A more practical one might be to accept that you will never have a close relationship with this brother-in-law, allow him to "enjoy" his jealousy and pretty much ignore him.**

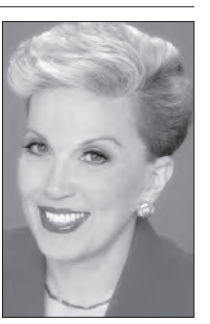
■■■

*For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)*

**DEAR ABBY**

**BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN**

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.*

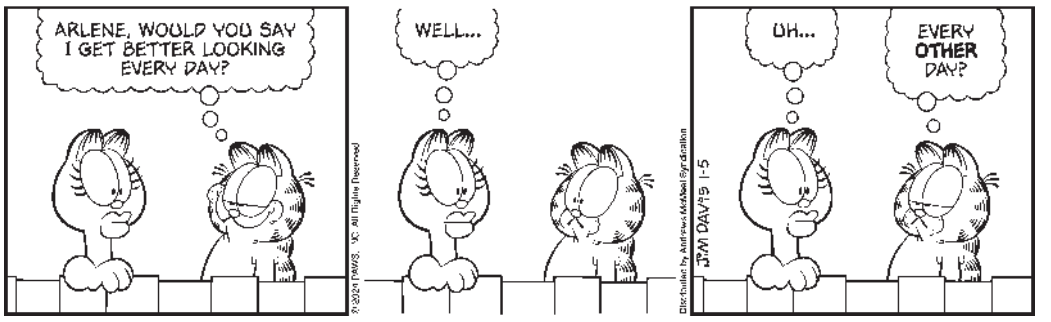
# Pastimes

## Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

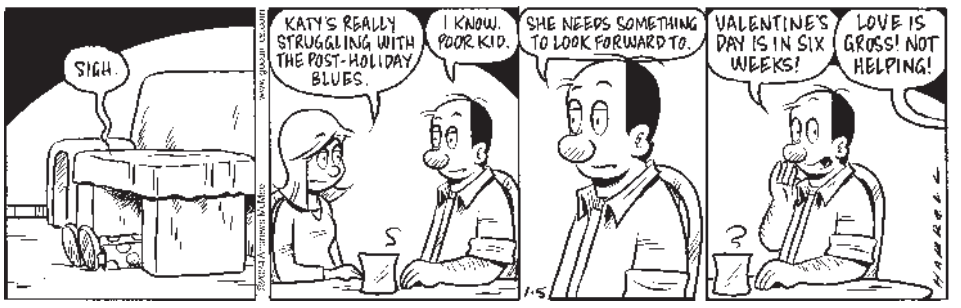
## Garfield®

By Jim Davis




## Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


SIGH.
KATY'S REALLY STRUGGLING WITH THE POST-HOLIDAY BLUES.
I KNOW. POOR KID.
SHE NEEDS SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO.
VALENTINE'S DAY IS IN SIX WEEKS!
LOVE IS GROSS! NOT HELPING!

## The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

## CROSSWORD

*By Eugene Sheffer*

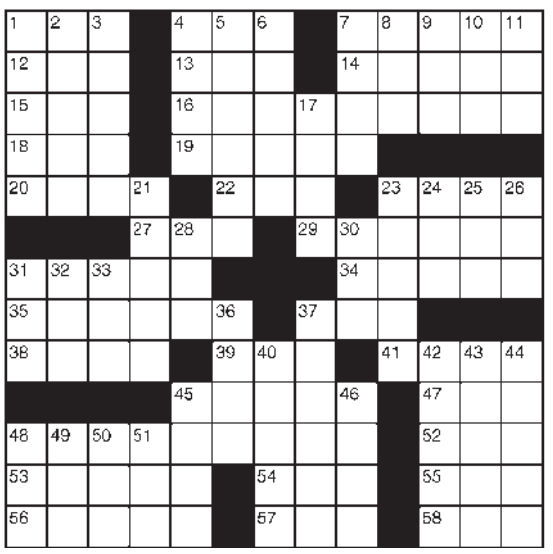
**ACROSS**
1 Fella
4 Cowboys' org.
7 Spanish resort isle
12 Literary collection
13 Flamenco cheer
14 Got along
15 Glacial
16 Beyond control
18 Eastern "way"
19 Poker pot
20 Whirled
22 "Spring ahead" hrs.
23 Periodontist's concern
27 Online chats, briefly
29 Puccini works
31 Supreme Court Justice Kagan
34 City in Provence
35 Blockage
37 "Tasty!"
38 Long tale
39 Past
41 Con job
45 Actress De La Garza
47 Hearty quaff
48 Inappropriately
52 Actress Vardalos
53 Stage comment
54 Parking place
55 Sawbuck
56 Get more magazines
57 Observe
58 Switch settings

**DOWN**
1 Entices
2 Open a toothpaste tube
3 Marshy inlet
4 Cranny
5 Hydration needs
6 Playwright/actor Tracy
7 Dubious
8 "Humbug!"
9 Nest egg letters
10 Buddhist sect
11 Toss in
17 "Beetle Bailey" pooch
21 Martial arts mercenary
23 Bacteria
24 Web address
25 West of Hollywood
26 Sound from a hot wok
28 Goat's plaint
30 "The Office" character
31 Overhead trains
32 Mauna —
33 Nest occupier
36 Beer ingredient
37 Fifth president
40 French people of ancient times
42 Poem division
43 UFO pilot
44 Stands for
45 Not many
46 Pot starter
48 Rowing need
49 Exploit
50 Can material
51 Keats creation

**Solution time: 25 mins.**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | F | N | | D | A | U | R | | A | B | B | A |
| I | V | E | | E | N | D | O | | L | O | O | M |
| N | F | W | R | I | O | O | D | | M | A | N | I |
| | | | F | I | T | | N | E | G | A | T | E | D |
| S | L | O | G | A | N | | S | U | N | | | |
| S | V | U | | S | I | B | | S | A | W | I | O |
| T | I | N | T | | X | E | S | | C | H | A | R |
| S | I | D | E | S | | I | A | M | | A | H | A |
| | | | N | A | P | | C | A | R | I | O | N |
| B | A | R | S | O | A | P | | H | A | S | | |
| A | C | A | I | | B | R | A | N | D | N | E | W |
| S | T | R | O | | L | O | N | E | | E | R | R |
| K | E | E | N | | O | M | A | H | | W | A | Y |

Yesterday's answer 1-5



**STUMPED?** For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

**CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY**: January Jones, 46; Bradley Cooper, 49; Carrie Ann Inaba, 56; Diane Keaton, 78.

**Happy Birthday:** Use your emotional energy wisely. Focus on clearing the way for what's to come. Embrace and make the changes that will optimize how and where you live. Getting your life in order will require decisions that are difficult but necessary. Use your imagination, and you'll come up with a plan that delivers the happiness you desire. Don't hesitate when action will get you where you want to go. Your numbers are 8, 14, 23, 27, 31, 39, 44.

**ARIES** *(March 21-April 19)*: Communication is the critical component to getting things done. Listen, learn, ask questions and take charge of your future. Refuse to let anyone decide what's next for you. Happiness begins with doing what's right and best for you. Romance and personal gain are within reach. ✪✪✪

**TAURUS** *(April 20-May 20)*: Start making changes that promote opportunity. Connect with people with as much to offer as you, and share information. The path to success requires action and participation. Follow your passion; if you love what you do, prosperity will follow. ✪✪✪

**GEMINI** *(May 21-June 20)*: Revise how you do things to ensure you maintain good health and safety measures in your everyday routine. Looking out for your interests instead of relying on others to do so will put you in a better position and help you avoid mistakes. ✪✪✪

**CANCER** *(June 21-July 22)*: Attend events that can offer introductions to people who can provide insight into future trends and possibilities. Explore prospects, and sign up for something that will broaden your awareness and connect you with someone who can help you achieve your goals. ✪✪✪✪

**LEO** *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Sulking won't fix anything. Address situations directly, and use charm to get past anyone who tries to challenge you. Don't feel the need to be a follower when leadership is your path to bigger and better opportunities. Pursue your dreams. ✪✪

**VIRGO** *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Lighten up and look over your options. A change may not be something you want, but after observing what's available, a change of heart will lead to an unexpected opportunity. Trust your ability to reach your goal, and you won't be disappointed. ✪✪✪✪

**LIBRA** *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Take a step back, and listen and observe. Gathering information will help you avoid getting entrenched in an emotional situation that occupies time or costs you financially. A positive approach, combined with kindness and understanding, will encourage better results. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

**SCORPIO** *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Don't allow emotional matters to surface, and don't get involved in gossip. Put your time and effort into something you enjoy doing, or expand your skills to cover what it takes to get ahead doing something you want. Aim for a stable and secure future. ✪✪✪

**SAGITTARIUS** *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Surround yourself with like-minded people you can trust to tell the truth. Don't buy into someone else's dream or pay for another's mistakes. Look at the big picture and distance yourself from risk and ventures that aren't your forte. Concentrate on love and personal happiness. ✪✪✪✪

## EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

**CAPRICORN** *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Cut to the chase and make your dreams a reality. Don't linger on things you cannot change. Pay attention to what's trending, and take advantage of what you know and can do to get ahead. Be ambitious and build your future on solid ground. ✪✪

**AQUARIUS** *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Don't get worked up over trivial matters. Letting your emotions take over will result in negative responses and loss. Bide your time and put your energy into personal growth and taking care of unfinished business. Set guidelines and practice what you preach. ✪✪

**PISCES** *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Put restrictions on spending, and concentrate on gaining knowledge and insight into what's possible. Don't expect everyone to have honest intentions. It's up to you to figure out what's legitimate before you agree to participate. ✪✪✪✪✪

**Birthday Baby**: You are steadfast, determined and bold. You are wise and complex.

*✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.*

# SUDOKU

**Conceptis Sudoku** *By Dave*

*Green*

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 4 | 7 | 6 | | |
| | 6 | | | | | | | |
| | 5 | 4 | | | | 9 | | |
| 8 | 3 | | 1 | 2 | | | | |
| | 4 | | | 9 | | 3 | | 2 |
| | | 6 | 8 | 3 | | 5 | 7 | |
| 4 | 1 | 5 | | | | | | |
| | | | 9 | 5 | 3 | | | 4 |
| | | | 4 | | 1 | | | 7 |

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/5

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

**Yesterday's Answer**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 5 |
| 7 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 2 |
| 5 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| 8 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| 2 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 9 |
| 3 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 8 |
| 4 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 3 |
| 1 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 4 |

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/4

©2012 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

## WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

**HOW TO PLAY:** All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

**ELLEN POMPEO** **Solution: 9 letters**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| M | B | Y | M | O | T | A | N | A | W | A | R | D | S | T |
| C | E | A | C | I | N | E | M | A | I | V | S | R | E | N |
| B | A | R | R | N | D | O | C | T | O | R | L | A | R | E |
| A | Y | L | E | T | O | K | A | A | V | I | O | M | I | L |
| D | E | I | A | D | E | L | A | C | J | I | A | A | E | A |
| B | S | N | O | M | I | N | A | T | I | O | N | S | S | T |
| L | P | E | N | A | I | T | D | R | H | M | E | C | C | H |
| O | M | A | N | V | M | T | H | E | S | L | A | Y | E | G |
| O | E | A | E | A | S | E | Y | S | R | O | E | I | R | I |
| D | D | R | L | I | J | J | O | S | E | P | H | E | M | L |
| E | Y | I | E | L | W | E | E | D | S | L | Y | O | N | N |
| S | B | H | O | T | E | L | E | V | I | S | I | O | N | O |
| U | D | I | R | E | C | T | O | R | R | V | N | E | P | O |
| O | S | N | O | S | A | E | S | E | H | C | A | E | B | M |
| H | R | S | T | T | E | S | U | H | C | A | S | S | A | M |

©2021 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 1/5

Actress, Anatomy, Awards, Bad Blood, Bartender, Beach, Calamity, Chris, Cinema, Dean, Dempsey, Director, Doctor, Drama, Eli, Grey's, Heist, House, Italian, Ivery, Jane, Joey, Joseph, Kathleen, Malibu, Massachusetts, Meredith, Miami, Moonlight, Nominations, Open, Seasons, Series, Sienna, Sloan, SoHo, Stella, Talent, Television, Vince, Weeds

**Yesterday's Answer: Wild Card**

The NEW **TELEWORD VINTAGE COLLECTION EDITION #1** can be purchased on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

# Pacers use 47-point 3rd quarter to beat Bucks for 5th straight win

**INDIANAPOLIS** (AP)—All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton wanted to reinforce that Indiana's success against Milwaukee wasn't a fluke.

So on Wednesday night, the budding, young star made sure of it—again.

Haliburton had 31 points and 12 assists and helped spur a 47-point third quarter to lead the Pacers past the Bucks 142-130 for their fifth consecutive victory.

"I think as a young group when you play good teams, you want to be as prepared for them as you can for them," Haliburton said. "But I think part of the maturation of this group has to be to continue that competitiveness and being up for games that aren't against the Bucks."

It's been a lopsided series this season. Just two days after ending Milwaukee's 15-game home court winning streak, they opened the second half on a 21-6 run and never trailed again to improve to 4-1.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 26 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for Milwaukee, falling just short of his fourth triple-double this season. Damian Lillard added 23 points and five assists, and Khris Middleton overcame a sprained right wrist and a sore right knee to add 19 points and seven assists.

For the Bucks, it's been a series filled with frustration.

The Central Division foes have gotten awfully familiar, playing five times in 54 days—including the In-Season Tournament semifinal in Las Vegas. Four games have produced combined scoring totals of at least 247 points.

"I think the embarrassing part is that we're just so much better than what we've shown in the games against them," Lillard said. "I also don't look at it like 'Oh, it's just the regular sesason.' We wanted to win these games."

The final outcomes were only part of what defined the series. It also became emotional and, at times, chippy.

A dispute over a missing game ball led to a bizarre postgame scene in December when Antetokounmpo sprinted toward the Indiana locker room. Bucks forward Bobby Portis was ejected from one game and in Las Vegas, Haliburton drew the ire of some for imitating Lillard by pointing toward his wrist after making a late 3-pointer as the Bucks were about to be eliminated.

The final regular-season game in this series only added fuel to the fire.

Indiana fans repeatedly counted the seconds it took Antetokounmpo took to shoot free throws, the Milwaukee bench was called for a technical in the third quarter and Lillard and Bennedict Mathurin were talking between the third and fourth quarters. Mathurin had 16 points.

AP

Indiana Pacers' Tyrese Haliburton (0) reacts during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Milwaukee Bucks, Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024, in Indianapolis

Then in a foul-prone fourth as Pacers swingman Buddy Hield threw a pass off the backboard to the trailing Isaiah Jackson for a dunk to make it 118-100 with 9:41 to play and following a Milwaukee timeout, Antetokounmpo was knocked hard to the ground. Players gathered near the basket and after an official review for a hostile act Milwaukee rookie Andre Jackson Jr. and Obi Toppin both were assessed technical fouls.

But the difference in this game was Indiana's third-quarter eruption.

Milwaukee emerged from a back-and-forth first half with a 68-66 lead, but the Pacers opened the second half on a 21-6 run, extended the lead to 113-97 after three quarters and the Bucks couldn't get closer than 10 the rest of the game.

"I would just say we did a good job of digging down and getting stops when we needed them," Haliburton said. "When we play in transition, were a really tough team to beat."

## PELICANS 117, TIMBERWOLVES 106

**MINNEAPOLIS** (AP)—Zion Williamson scored 27 points and New Orleans kept rolling with a victory over West-leading Minnesota.

CJ McCollum added 24 points and Brandon Ingram had 19. The Pelicans pulled away in the second half for their fourth straight victory and ninth in 12 games.

On the second night of a back-to-back after beating Brooklyn 112-85, a game that allowed Williamson and Ingram to both play under 30 minutes, New Orleans went on the road and shot 55.6% from the field. Williamson and Ingram combined to shoot 18 of 26.

Anthony Edwards scored 35 points for Minnesota, and Karl-Anthony Towns had 22. Minnesota dropped to 14-2 at home and lost consecutive games for the first time this season.

## HEAT 110, LAKERS 96

**LOS ANGELES** (AP)—Tyler Herro scored 21 points, Duncan Robinson had 11 of his 13 points in the fourth quarter and Miami beat Los Angeles.

Jaime Jaquez Jr. added 16 points, Nikola Jovic and Bam Adebayo scored 15 apiece AND Kevin Love had a season-high 14 rebounds along with 10 points. Miami was without Jimmy Butler for the sixth time in seven games because of irritation in his right foot.

Anthony Davis had 29 points and 18 rebounds for Los Angeles. The Lakers were just 4 of 30 on 3-pointers and committed 15 of their 22 turnovers in the first half as they lost for the ninth time in their last 12 games. LeBron James was 6 of 18 from the field and had 12 points.

## MAVERICKS 126, TRAIL BLAZERS 97

**DALLAS** (AP)—Luka Doncic scored 30 of his 41 points in the first half, Kyrie Irving added 29 in his second game back from a bruised right heel and Dallas routed Portland.

The All-Star pair went a combined 23 of 40 from the field before sitting out the fourth quarter. They were just 12 of 34 during a 37-point loss at Utah in Irving's return after missing 12 games.

Irving tied his season high with nine rebounds and Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 14 points for the Mavericks, who opened a seven-game homestand—their longest of the season—with the first of two in a row against Portland.

Shaedon Sharpe scored 16 points for Portland.

## KINGS 138, MAGIC 135, 2OT

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** (AP)—Malik Monk scored 37 points, Domantas Sabonis had 22 points, 23 rebounds and 12 assists for his seventh triple-double of the season and Sacramento outlasted Orlando in double-overtime.

Sacramento overcame a hot shooting night by the short-handed Magic, who made 25 3-pointers to break the franchise record. That helped them come back from a 13-point deficit in the third quarter to take the lead in the fourth.

Paolo Banchero scored a career-high 43 points to lead the Magic, but missed a potential tying 3 as the final buzzer sounded.

## CLIPPERS 121, SUNS 122

**PHOENIX** (AP)—Paul George scored 33 points, Kawhi Leonard added 30 and Los Angeles beat Phoenix for its fourth straight victory and 13th in 15 games.

George shot 8 of 14 from the field, going 5 of 10 from 3-point range. James Harden had 22 points and 11 assists to help Los Angeles end Phoenix's four-game winning streak.

Devin Booker led the Suns with 35 points on 11-of-15 shooting, with Kevin Durant missing his second straight game because of soreness in his right hamstring. Bradley Beal added 21 but shot just 7 of 20 and missed all six of his 3-point attempts.

## JAZZ 154, PISTONS 148, OT

**SALT LAKE CITY** (AP)—Jordan Clarkson scored 29 of his 36 points after halftime and Lauri Markkanen added 31 in Utah's overtime victory over Detroit.

The Jazz sent the Pistons to their 30th loss in 31 games, winning for the ninth time in 12 games.

Bojan Bogdanovic scored a season-high 36 points for Detroit, making eight 3s. Cade Cunningham had 31 points and 12 assists. The Pistons have lost 17 in a row on the road.

## HAWKS 141, THUNDER 138

**ATLANTA** (AP)—Jalen Johnson scored a career-high 28 points and Atlanta held off Oklahoma to end the Thunder's five-game winning streak.

Atlanta opened the game with 11 straight points and never trailed. Trae Young had 24 points and 11 assists, one of four Hawks players who scored more than 20. Bogdan Bogdanovic added 23 points and Dejounte Murray had 22.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 33 points and 13 rebounds for Oklahoma City.

## KNICKS 116, BULLS 100

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Julius Randle scored 35 points, Jalen Brunson had 31 points and 13 assists and New York beat Chicago.

OG Anunoby and Donte DiVincenzo each scored 11 points for New York, and Isaiah Hartenstein had a career-high 20 rebounds along with 10 points.

DeMar DeRozan had 28 points for Chicago. Colby White added 26.

## CAVALIERS 140, WIZARDS 101

**CLEVELAND** (AP)—Max Strus scored 24 points and Cleveland had its highest-scoring game and most-lopsided victory of the season, routing Washington to open a two-game set.

Donovan Mitchell scored 22 points in 24 minutes to help Cleveland snapped a two-game losing streak. Caris LeVert added 21 points in 23 minutes, and Jarrett Allen had 17 points, 19 rebounds and seven assists. Kyle Kuzma scored 16 points for Washington.

The teams will meet again Friday night in Cleveland.

## RAPTORS 116, GRIZZLIES 111

**MEMPHIS, Tenn.** (AP)—Immanuel Quickley scored 26 points, Pascal Siakam added 24 and Toronto held on to beat Memphis,

Quickley was 8 of 18 from the field, hitting 5 of 8 3-pointers. Hecame to Toronto in a late-December trade that sent OG Anunoby to New York.

Ja Morant had 28 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for Memphis.

## ROCKETS 112, NETS 101

**HOUSTON** (AP)—Alperen Sengun scored 30 points, Fred VanVleet added 21 points and 10 assists and Houston sent Brooklyn to its fifth straight loss.

VanVleet made 6 of 8 3-pointers and Houston finished 19 of 39 from long distance.

Mikal Bridges and Cam Johnson each scored 15 points for Brooklyn. The Nets have lost 10 of their last 12.

# Chiefs' Mahomes to sit regular-season finale vs. Chargers with AFC West secured

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** (AP)—Patrick Mahomes will sit out the Kansas City Chiefs' regular-season finale against the Chargers on Sunday in Los Angeles with their eighth straight AFC West title secured and the No. 3 seed in the playoffs already locked up.

The Chiefs can do no better or worse in their postseason positioning after last week's win over Cincinnati clinched the division, so coach Andy Reid said Wednesday that Mahomes would get a week of rest.

Veteran backup Blaine Gabbert will start and second-year pro Chris Oladokun, who has spent the season on the practice squad, will be the primary backup.

Gabbert was signed in the offseason to replace Chad Henne, who retired after last year's Super Bowl triumph. The Chiefs have long valued having a veteran behind Mahomes, and Gabbert has started 48 games and appeared in 68 over 12 NFL seasons.

"He works so stinking hard in practice. It's great to have that opportunity to go out and play," Reid said. "He's been a starter in the league. We have confidence he knows what to do, and he'll go in there and do well."

AP

Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes celebrates following an NFL football game against the Cincinnati Bengals Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, in Kansas City, Mo.

The Chiefs (10-6) have struggled with offensive consistency this season, whether because of dropped passes, penalties or missed assignments. But while they finally played well in a 25-17 victory over the Bengals—despite drives fizzling and Harrison Butker kicking six field goals—Reid said he didn't consider giving Mahomes any snaps to keep the momentum going.

Mahomes instead will turn most of his attention to the five potential opponents that Kansas City could face the following week, and Gabbert and Oladokun will split practice reps as they prepared to head to Los Angeles.

"Ultimately the reason we play football is to play in the games, right? And it's a great opportunity not only for myself but others to play in different positions than they have been in throughout the year," Gabbert said. "It's great to get reps under your belt so when your number is called in the playoffs, if it is called, you're ready to go."

Reid indicated he was aware of some looming milestones, but he declined to say whether they would matter in playing time.

The biggest might belong to Travis Kelce, who needs 16 yards receiving for his eighth straight 1,000-yard season. That would extend his own club record and the NFL record for a tight end, and be the fourth-longest streak in NFL history.

"That's not how Travis plays. He wants team success first and he's always been that way," Gabbert said. "If it's Coach Reid's decision to have him rest, he'll rest. But if he's out there, we'll do our damn best to get him those yards."

Wide receiver Rashee Rice needs 58 yards receiving to break Dwayne Bowe's franchise record for a rookie, while defensive tackle Chris Jones needs a half sack to trigger a $1.25 million bonus in the revised contract he signed prior to the season.

Asked how the conversations about those milestones might go, Reid said with a smile: "Probably one-sided."

Toney (hip) was back after missing two games.

# Rams will sit Stafford, Kupp, Donald, Kyren in regular-season finale vs 49ers to rest for playoffs

**THOUSAND OAKS, Calif.** (AP)—Matthew Stafford, Aaron Donald, Kyren Williams, Cooper Kupp and linebacker Ernest Jones will not play in the playoff-bound Los Angeles Rams' regular-season finale at San Francisco.

Carson Wentz will make his first start for the Rams (9-7) on Sunday, coach Sean McVay said Wednesday. Los Angeles also will be without Williams, the NFL's second-leading rusher; Kupp, the Super Bowl 56 MVP; Donald, the seven-time All-Pro defensive lineman; and Jones, the Rams' leading tackler.

Tight end Tyler Higbee (dislocated shoulder) and swing tackle Joe Noteboom (plantar fascia) also will sit out Week 18 due to injury.

The Rams have clinched their fifth playoff spot in McVay's seven seasons, and earning a slightly higher seed clearly means little to the coach with most of the NFC playoff picture still in flux behind the top-seeded 49ers. Even beyond his resting stars, McVay made it clear he wants his key players to do as little as possible in a game with minimal meaning.

"There's not a perfect solution, especially when you're talking about 53 guys (on the roster), 48 (who must be) active (on game day). We do have a couple of injuries," McVay said. "This was just what we felt like was the best thing, but I do think it offers an opportunity for Carson to go play, and we're excited to see him do his thing."

AP

Los Angeles Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford (9) calls out to his teammates in the first half of an NFL football game against the New York Giants, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, in East Rutherford, N.J.

The 49ers are sitting quarterback Brock Purdy and running back Christian McCaffrey. Sam Darnold will start in Purdy's place.

Los Angeles will finish sixth in the NFC if it beats the 49ers or if Green Bay loses to Chicago on Sunday. If the 49ers and Packers both win, Los Angeles will be the seventh seed.

The Rams could play Detroit, Dallas or Philadelphia in the opening round.

"When you look at the projections, I think they're excellent teams regardless," McVay said. "We felt like this approach was the best one for our team. You want to see guys go compete and do well, but that was what we felt like."

McVay stressed that he paid attention to contract incentives for any resting players to make sure he didn't prevent anybody from earning a bonus.

And rookie receiver Puka Nacua will suit up for the Rams in Santa Clara, McVay said. Nacua is four receptions and 29 yards away from setting the NFL rookie-season records in both categories.

"I think you'd like to see him get an opportunity for him to do something special, and then be smart with him," McVay said.

Wentz signed with the Rams on Nov. 8, shortly after backup Brett Rypien struggled through a loss to Green Bay. Wentz, the No. 2 overall pick in the 2016 draft and the longtime Philadelphia quarterback, had been out of the NFL since playing for Washington last year.

He has taken only three snaps so far for the Rams, but has nearly two months of practice time in McVay's offense.

"It's been fun being here," said Wentz, who will make his 93rd NFL start. "Obviously it's a different role for me, and it's been new in that regard, but it's been a lot of fun working with Matthew and seeing how he goes about his business. It's a very young coaching staff, and that's been really fun to be a part of. It's a very different scheme than what I'm used to, so for me it's just been all about learning and accumulating knowledge within the system. I've enjoyed it."

Undrafted rookie Dresser Winn will be Wentz's backup after getting re-signed to the practice squad Tuesday.

The decision puts an early end to an impressive regular season for Stafford, a 15-year veteran who has rebounded from serious injuries that sidelined him for half of 2022.

Stafford is sixth in the NFL with 3,965 yards passing, but he won't be able to secure his 10th career 4,000-yard season if he doesn't play in San Francisco. Only six quarterbacks in NFL history have more than Stafford's nine 4,000-yard seasons.

"He understands the big picture," McVay said. "You always talk through those things ... but he understood. These guys all want to play (but) when you explain to them what our thought process was as coaches, they're totally supportive."

Stafford has thrown 24 touchdown passes with 11 interceptions this season, but he has been very sharp since returning from a thumb injury that forced him to miss the Rams' final 1 1/2 games before their bye week.

Since the bye, Stafford has passed for 1,895 yards with 16 touchdowns and just four interceptions—two in the Rams' narrow win over the New York Giants last week.

Stafford also appears to be relatively healthy this season, particularly compared to the stretch runs of his first two seasons with the Rams. He has been sacked 30 times in 15 games this season after getting sacked 29 times in nine games last season.

# Rocball marked 40th anniversary in 2023

The sport of Rocball has been an annual sporting event played on a Public School System campus every year in the CMNI since 1983.

When there have been years when a lack of commitment, facilities and/or funding for intramural and interscholastic sports existed for one reason or the other, there were teams and leagues of players year after year and decade after decade competing in Rocball games for a lunch time and after-school activity outdoors on the grass, on the beach, on a parking lot, and in a gymnasium.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rocball was defined years ago as "Saipan's own sport" by the local newspapers, but Rocball players have been and continue to be from all parts of Micronesia and beyond.

Rocball was defined years ago as "Saipan's own sport" by the local newspapers, but Rocball players have been and continue to be from all parts of Micronesia and beyond.

One of the most important attributes about the sport of Rocball is the impact it had on changing the anemic competitive features of side-out volleyball for Rocball's system of rally point scoring and unrestricted hitting. It wasn't until after Rocball gained international recognition on the CNN World Report in 1993 and 1994 that the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball changed volleyball with Rocball rules of play. That issue was documented by a letter from FIVB in 1999 in response to a certified letter sent from Rocball to FIVB in 1995.

Since 2010, there have been Rocball games played at the local and national levels in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Rocball certificates of registration were issued to other countries that included Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. Kenya, Tanzania, Liberia, Spain, and Argentina. There have been two international sport forums that have involved the sport of Rocball in zoom meetings from here on Saipan. One meeting was held in Argentina and the other international forum was held in Pakistan.

This year there are 10 teams that will compete for the Rocball championship title—Nesian Power, Charii Fahn, Topshakas, Border Control, Spicy Locals, Bolley Ballerz, Rizzler Rocball Association, Quest, Aces, and Boddies.

The 10-team round robin scheduled is for 45 games but teams will be eliminated after their third loss.

The playoffs will include the four teams with the best win-loss record. There were two weeks of Rocball practice games held at Marianas High School during lunch time to teach new players about the game's rules and refresher games for last year's players. This year's Rocball games began yesterday, Jan. 4, with Nesian Power and Charii Fahn squaring it off. ***(PR)***

## Nat'l hoops program pre-tryout meeting this Saturday

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation is holding a pre-tryout meeting for those interested to be part of the senior national basketball program this Saturday, Jan. 6, at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Meeting for those interested to be a part of the women's team is from 9am-10am, and for men it's from 10am to 11am.

Tryouts for the teams are set for Jan. 9-13. The Top 20 or 15 players will be selected after the tryouts.

Players selected will make up the teams that will compete in the 2024 Micronesian Games from June 15-24 in the Marshall Islands.

From Jan. 16 to March 31, the pre-season training will commence and will be focused on team plays along with conditioning and skills. A roster of 12 or 15 players will be announced on March 2.

Then, tentatively from April 4-7, the players will see action in the University of Guam Friendship Tournament in Guam. After, the players will undergo a three-month on-season training phase from April 8 to June 14.

The selection of the 12-man roster will be held on May 25. From the beginning of the tryouts, the teams have a total of five months to prepare for the Micronesian Games.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation is holding a pre-tryout meeting for their senior national program this Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium. Those selected will make up the men's and women's teams that will be competing in the 2024 Micronesian Games in the Marshall Islands.

## 4

*From page 24*

his streak was when he had a bout of food poisoning, sustained three broken ribs, and after his vasectomy

"None of those runs were very enjoyable and they weren't my fastest times...but I still made sure I was running it."

As for his usual routes during the streak, Bauer said they changed a lot due to his constant travelling.

"On Saipan, I liked running Wireless Ridge and the beach pathway, but I got to log runs in South Korea, Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Guam, and many U.S. states this year. My warmest run was 93° F in Australia and my coldest run was in Kansas at 17° F. My shortest run was 1 mile (after the vasectomy, I was just content keeping the streak going) and my longest run was 13.1 miles in Hanoi, Vietnam when I ran the midnight half marathon. A great experience!"

Bauer intends to keep the streak alive in the foreseeable future.

Ganacias said completing the streak was both a challenging and a rewarding experience.

"The hardest part of the challenge was when I contracted the flu virus. Although I wasn't feeling well, I continued to do my routine run at a very slow pace."

Her usual routes are the Beach Road pathway and the Oleai Sports Complex track. During rainy days, she hops on the treadmill and whenever off-island, she looks for the nearest track and field facility.

The radio disc jockey's shortest run was 1 mile and her longest was 21 kilometers in the half marathon.

"I dedicate my achievement to my supportive family, friends, Run Saipan, and Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz, Jr., and especially to my husband Dan. He always reminds me that consistency is the key to achieving your fitness goals therefore I make sure I did not miss a single day of running," she said.

Ganacias also plans to continue her run streak in 2024.

"After completing the 365 days, I enjoyed the mile-a-day journey. Therefore, I plan to continue the challenge as long as my body can take it."

To celebrate her accomplishment, Ganacias went to Guam and ran her last mile there.

"I asked my two close friends, Ira and Amor, to make a cardboard banner stating that I completed the 365 mile-a-day challenge. My husband invited me to join him in Guam to celebrate my accomplishment and to welcome 2024 there. My husband took my pictures with the cardboard banners and then we ended the celebration at a local restaurant."

Dela Cruz, who pioneered the run streak challenge on Saipan, congratulated all four for completing the 365-day challenge.

"Every run streak has its own story. Everyone has their own reason for doing it. I'm just glad I helped open the gateway for people to find a way to help themselves mentally it physically with this challenge. I'm very happy the 365 community is growing here. Congratulations to everyone for their hard work and perseverance. No one can ever take that away from them," he said.

## REDS

*From page 24*

just the second inning.

The game ended early in the third inning via mercy rule as the Spartans could not catch up to the huge Reds lead. The Reds went out with a bang as they scored eight more runs for a 21-1 final.

The Reds' Jason Reyes was on fire as he led the team with three hits from three at-bats, scoring three runs, and three RBIs, plus hitting a triple. Hector Efraim then went two for two at-bats, scored two runs, drove in two RBIs, and hit a double. Dennis Cruz joined in the fray with two out of four at-bats, three runs, two hits, one RBI, and a triple.

After this win, the Reds pushed themselves to the win column at 3-2 with the Dodgers. The Pirates are still the team to beat with an undefeated 5-0 record; the Blue Jays and Marlins are at 2-3; and the Spartans have yet to win with five losses.

## ALLIANA'S

*From page 24*

the game could've gone to any team at that point, but Alliana's Jomar Tengco was the saving grace as he threw a Hail Mary from the 3-point line and made it in for a 60-57 lead.

The court and Alliana's bench exploded into cheers as Alliana's breathed a sigh of relief to have the upper hand once and for all.

Legends were gassed out as they tried their best to catch up, but could only score 2 more points off free throws. Tengco put in one free throw for good measure and Alcantara added two more before time expired for a 63-59 final count.

Alliana's leading scorers were Alcantara with 23, Jobert Meriales with 19, and Richard Mendoza who scored 13. For the Legends, Alken Ege scored 16, Jimboy Tabora had 13 markers, and Jun Tabora contributed 10.

Third place went to the Guardians after they beat Bourbon Bar & Cafe, 81-65, earlier in the evening.

After the awards ceremony that followed the finals, Alliana's coach/player Mark Matuguina said that he told their team to "give it all they can" in the last quarter. He saw that Legends were tired and told them to go man-to-man defense and just give it all they got.

He said in the game, they were down by 14 points at one point, then trimmed the deficit down to 3 points. By then, he told the team to "settle down, but put on the tension. They knew it was a crucial game."

Matugiuna said the team's head coach, Ohlan Tengco, couldn't make it to the finals because he was actually on the way to Saipan from the Philippines the next day. Matuguina then thanked the tourney's commissioner, Sonny Ebuen, and the rest of the committee for the league that allowed "regular basketball players" to join and play.

**Alliana's 63** — Alcantara 23, Meriales 19, Mendoza 13, Tengco 6, Leightly 2.

**Legends 59** — Ege 16, Jimboy Tabora 13, Jun Tabora 10, Zapata 8, Tibayan 7, P. Tabora 5.

**Scoring by quarters**: 17-21, 26-30, 37-48, 63-59.

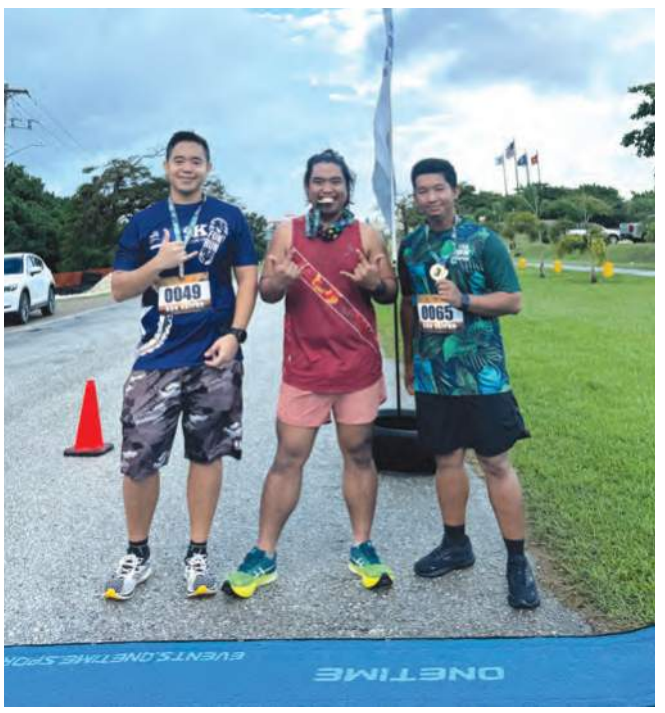
LEIGH GASES

Champion team Alliana's takes a group photo with their championship trophy and league commissioner Sonny Ebuen, far right, during the awards ceremony of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court last Wednesday night.

# Run from '23 Mile Race

LEIGH GASES

Participants of the Run from '23 Mile Race take a traditional jumping photo at the finish line of the new course at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve last Sunday.



LEIGH GASES

From left, second place in the 19-34 age group Kurt Songsong, first place Simon Necesito, and third place Ricky Santiago pose for a photo during the awards ceremony at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve.

LEIGH GASES

From left, Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, second place of the 50-54 age group, first place James Abuy, and first place of the 55-59 age group, Cary Bertoncini, pose for a photo during the awards ceremony at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve.

LEIGH GASES

Prams division winner Anastasia Dela Cruz and Alexander Dela Cruz pose with husband and father and Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. at the finish line of the Run from '23 Mile Race at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve.

LEIGH GASES

From left, second place in the Run from '23 Mile Race, Ann Bang, first place Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez, and third place Shiela Mabutas during the awards ceremony after the race at the Smiling Cove Marina.

LEIGH GASES

From left, 14U division first place Eamon Tang and second place Victor Neil Santos pose for a photo during the awards ceremony at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve.

LEIGH GASES

From left, second place in the 18U division, Victor Nash Santos, first place Rex Pixley, and third place Simon Tang pose for a photo during the awards ceremony at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve.

LEIGH GASES

From left, third place Kosuke Sato, first place Jody O'Sullivan, and second place Pony Tang pose for a photo during the awards ceremony after the race at the Smiling Cove Marina.

LEIGH GASES

Chiharu Sato in the 50-54 age group poses for a photo during the awards ceremony at the Smiling Cove Marina on New Year's Eve.

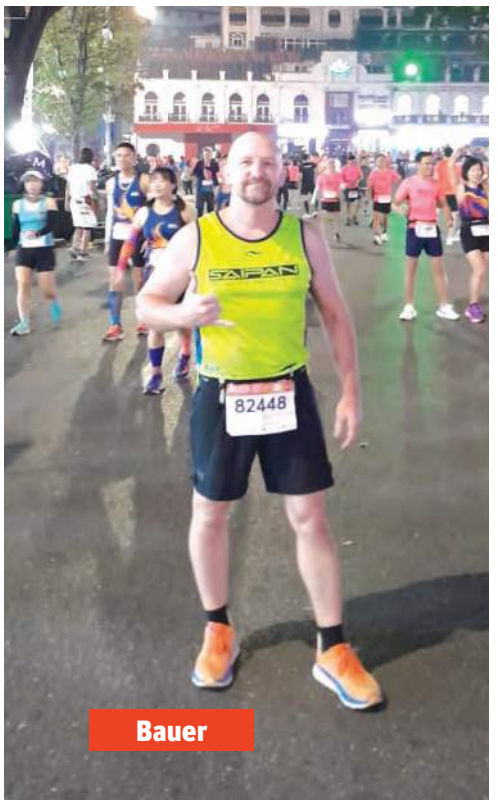
Pacers use 47-point 3rd quarter to beat Bucks for 5th straight win.

PAGE 20

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Rocball marked 40th anniversary in 2023.

PAGE 22



Bauer

Ganacias

Bracken

Ortizo

# 4 latest to complete run streak

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Jessica Ortizo, Jean Bracken, Rick Bauer, and Zaiyra Ganacias are the latest local runners to complete a 365-day run streak. All four ran at least a mile a day this past year.

Ortizo, who concluded her streak in Portland, Oregon where she relocated before 2023 ended, said she started the run streak journey mainly to challenge herself.

"I thought I could not do it. It's harder than I thought, especially if it's a rainy day. The last few days that I traveled to the U.S. I actually had to run in the airport in San Francisco," she said.

Aside from keeping the streak while traveling from Saipan to the mainland, the 53-year-old native of Davao City, Philippines also overcame running during a typhoon and in snow and injuries playing soccer during her streak.

Ortizo, whose longest run was a mile and longest was 30 kilometers, unfortunately halted her streak due to her work schedule.

"But I will still continue running on my free time." Her favorite run routes are the Gov. Froilan C. Tenorio Beach Pathway and Marpi.

Bracken said her streak began as a 31-day running challenge in January last year.

"I wanted to continue on because I saw a lot of changes in my body. So far, I lost 40 lbs from running," said the 27-year-old Spicy Thai assistant manager.

She said the hardest part of the streak is actually just lacing them up and going out to run.

"Once you dress up in your running gear, running becomes easier. The initial action of getting out of bed is the hardest. I dedicate this challenge to myself! I learned a lot about myself on this challenge and it was such an eyeopener to who I actually am as a person," she said.

Unlike Ortizo, Bracken said she will continue her streak in the new year.

"I am hoping to do this challenge in 2024 and I'm hoping to inspire others to do the same!" she said.

Bracken's usual run route is around the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park and American Memorial Park. Her shortest run is a mile and her longest was the recent half marathon last December.

Like Ortizo and Bracken, Bauer started his streak as a personal challenge to himself.

"I started the streak as a way to challenge myself to be consistent and force myself away from excuses. There were a few days when you just don't feel like it, but after a month or two, a daily run becomes so routine that it's just built into the day and would feel weird if you didn't get out there."

The 42-year-old federal government employee said the hardest part of keeping

See 4 on Page 22

## Reds outscore Spartans, 21-1

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With sluggers back to the diamond from the holidays, the Reds didn't waste any time and outscored the Spartans, 21-1, Wednesday night in the continuation of the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Master's League.

The lone run by the Spartans was made in the first inning by lead-off batter, Isaac Aguon. From there, Reds pitcher Joe Kapileo proceeded to shut down their lineup.

Only three more hits were made by Spartans' Aguon, Mike Guerrero, and J.J. Teigita, but they were left stranded as Kapileo went on to strike out and induce ground balls to the rest of the Spartans' batters.

The Reds' offense, on the other hand, was the total opposite of the Spartans as they brought in 14 runs by

See REDS on Page 22

LEIGH GASES
Reds pitcher Joe Kapileo readies for a pitch during one of their games in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League played at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

## Alliana's clinches B League champs

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

It was a hard-fought finals matchup, but Alliana's came from behind with a few clutch plays in the last minutes of the game to win the championship of the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League.

Alliana's was down by double digits at one point, but with a bit of luck, perseverance, and a never-give-up attitude, they rallied in the final minutes and won the title against Team Legends, 63-59, last Wednesday night at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

Both teams were exhausted heading into the fourth quarter as Alliana's fought tooth and nail to get within at least 1 point from the Legends. Reprieve came later with 3:30 left, as J.R. Alcantara evened up the game, 54-54.

It was crunch time for both teams as Legends tried to fan the flames from a suddenly hot Alliana's offense. Legends missed a few opportunities to overtake the lead once again and before they knew it, Alliana's had a 2-point lead, 56-54.

It was deadlocked once again, 57-57, with 49 seconds left, and

See ALLIANA'S on Page 22

LEIGH GASES
Alliana's coach/player Mark Matuguina goes for a jumper against a Legends player during the third quarter of their finals game in the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court last Wednesday night.